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ABSTRACT

This document consists of two critical papers on schooling in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), followed by reports on specific subject areas. The first paper, "If Wishes Were Horses: The Parent Role in a Participative System of Schooling," by C. Blakers, is a comprehensive examination of concepts, relationships, and issues concerning parents as an integral part of the school system. Chapters are as follows: (1) an independent education authority for the ACT; (2) the family and the school; (3) concepts of collaboration; (4) participative decision-making; (5) the participative system; (6) the neighborhood school; and (7) the role of parent organizations. The second essay, "What Is the Ideal Years 7-10 Curriculum in the ACT?," by C. W. Collins, is a brief opinion paper on junior secondary curriculum reform in public schools. After noting the crisis of purpose in current educational practice, the author reassesses basic assumptions in curriculum planning, based on a review of public opinion research, historical perspectives, and parent perspectives. He recommends a new approach based on an understanding of what is powerful and what is trivial in knowledge. The subsequent "Reports of the Interstate Subject Consultants" consist of reviews and recommendations for each subject area of the ACT curriculum: art, English, history, home economics, industrial arts, languages, mathematics and computing, music, physical education, science and agriculture, and social science. (TE)

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a review of high schools in the act

2 critical papers

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C. Blakers, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University

WHAT IS THE IDEAL YEARS 7-10 CURRICULUM IN THE ACT?

C.W. Collins, School of Education, Canberra College of Advanced Education

REPORTS OF THE INTERSTATE SUBJECT CONSULTANTS

IF WISHES WERE HORSES ....

The parent role in a participative system of schooling

A discussion paper to raise some issues

C. Blakers

November 1982

PREFACE

It is impossible to discuss The Parent Role in ACT Schooling without in fact discussing the concepts and operations of the whole system - if it is genuinely believed that parents are an integral component of the system. This paper therefore attempts to be a comprehensive outline of concepts, relationships and issues. In so doing and in trying to restrict length to more or less readable proportions, it commits many sins of omission and of generalisation. Nevertheless, it may serve to open up some of the important issues of a system of education which sets out to forge new relationships among all those involved in the education of children in schools.

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Chapter 1

AN INDEPENDENT EDUCATION AUTHORITY FOR THE ACT

The Educational Circumstances

In a short story called The Machine Shops, E.M. Forster visualised a society of the future: a passive society whose wants were catered for by the omniservant and omnipotent Machine. Gradually and inevitably, the services given by the Machine deteriorated in quality. At each stage of the deterioration members of the community registered indignant protests through the recognised channels. In due course, assurances of well-being or improvement were returned. Nothing happened. Memories are short. Before long, the depreciated standard became the new norm, and so on to the point of dissolution and chaos.

To many people in the mid-1960s, there seemed to be considerable similarity between Forster's imagined society and the schooling being provided by State systems of education in which quality was being forgotten under the pressures of quantity, economy and expediency. The schools were crowded because more and more students were seeking more and higher educational qualifications as the entrée to good jobs. They had been starved of resources because they were a State responsibility and Commonwealth money and interest were focused on higher education. There was an inevitable shortage of able and well qualified teachers since these could choose from the many better paid and higher status jobs offering. Teacher turnover was at a rate which made it rare for a class of children to retain the same teacher for the whole of the school year. 'During this period', wrote Karmel in 1966, 'charges of educational crisis and denials have been flying back and forth; as have allegations that the cost of education will ruin the country'.[1] The situation was described rather more dramatically in newspaper headlines such as The Festering Sores in Victoria's Schools[2] and A Shortage of Everything[3]; and more irately in letters from parents such as that which complained that nine different teachers for a Kindergarten class in nine months was making of the children 'an experiment in adaptability'.[4] This was the context within which the campaign for and the concepts of a separate school system for the ACT began to develop. The campaign was a reaction to the shortages and difficulties of the 1960s, and the concepts as they developed were a rejection of traditional Australian patterns of schooling.

Australian education originated within the industrially oriented social concepts of nineteenth century English mass education, but the patterns of schooling were shaped by Australian historical origins and geographical conditions to produce education and education systems with particularly Australian characteristics. The convict origins of most early settlement laid the foundations for authoritarian decision-making. Geography and hard living conditions encouraged a centralisation of decision-making and discouraged demands for local government. Hence the development of centralised government in many spheres which, in other countries, are managed by local communities.

In schooling, this centralisation was further reinforced by the bitterness of sectarian rivalry which bred suspicion of local initiative in education and saw an impartial and centralised Department of education as an acceptable compromise among the warring sects.

So were produced the centralised departments of education which followed the independence of the States in the nineteenth century and which were charged with the responsibility of providing public elementary education. They developed as large systems in which decision-making was highly centralised, in which the schools were largely segregated from the community and from which controversial issues - that is, those of most concern to the community - were as far as possible excluded.

The centralisation of education, with time and size, inevitably produced rigidity of thinking, adherence to established practices and resistance to change. At the same time, and almost as a corollary, it discouraged community involvement in education except in the most limited fund-raising capacities. It offered few opportunities to teachers to assume responsibility, to make decisions and to show initiative. It encouraged a defensiveness and fear of challenge within schools and departments which further strengthened the barriers between school and community. Combined with centralised decision-making and the lack of community involvement, a continuing sensitivity to and avoidance of controversial issues tended to ensure that schools became more and more divorced from the concerns, issues and changing values of ordinary community life.

There were few to question these patterns as long as schools were seen as having a clearly defined purpose - that of teaching the basics plus a little culture and vocational training to the great majority of students and filtering out a few of the brightest to complete secondary education and go on to university. State systems of education were able to maintain their character and their impregnability for almost a century. They could ignore the astonished comments of visiting educationists at the lack of community participation in schooling and the unkinder epithets of 'monolithic' and 'immovable' flung at them by some Australians. On the whole, they were reflecting a characteristically Australian lack of interest in participative government of any kind and at any level.

Ivan Turner in 1958 making a plea for some experimental Local Education Activities (LEAs) in New South Wales, acknowledged

> There can be no doubt, however, that Australians are not yet ready for the wholesale organization of local education authorities: the tradition of local government in Australia is too weak.[5]

By 1965, Professor P.H. Partridge was writing:

> The decentralization of educational policy ... appears to be one of the permanently lost causes.[6]

Yet even as he wrote, the pressures for change in the provisions and processes of schooling were becoming evident. The Second World War and the rapid expansion and comparative affluence which followed it changed social expectations and attitudes. Educational qualification became more than ever the key to a good job, money, status and presumably happiness. A more socially mobile and ambitious population demanded that schooling, and education generally, provide the avenue to educational qualification not just for the few as previously, but for all. Amid the rapidly increasing school enrolments and student retention rates, and in the face of the clear inability of State systems of education to provide, financially or administratively, adequate schooling

to meet demands, public concern expressed itself not only in newspaper headlines but also in political pressures which led eventually to the establishment of the Schools Commission in 1973-74.

Public concern was however also generating some more fundamental thinking about the structures and processes of schooling. People began to query structures and processes which separated schools not only from the community in general but also from the parents and families of the children they taught. Concepts of parent involvement began to be discussed and developed. Change was in the air, foreshadowing a Schools Commission which would adopt as one of its principal objectives the decentralisation of decision-making in schooling and the involvement of parents, teachers and the community at all levels of decision-making.

Nevertheless, as described in The Development of an Independent Education Authority by Hughes and Mulford,[7] the campaign for a separate education system for the ACT was mainly a local and to a large extent a personal reaction to the inadequacies of schooling and to the impotence imposed on parents by highly centralised and impersonal decision-making.

The NSW system of education at the time (which included the ACT as part of its province) seemed the archetype of Australian patterns of educational administration: large, highly centralised, impersonal; rigid in its administration by formula and precedent; secretive in its fear of challenge and criticism. The root question was whether public education was conformist by nature or merely by tradition; whether, as J.S. Mill maintained in the nineteenth century, 'a general State education' had by its nature to be 'a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another' (p.1033),[8] or whether public education could provide schooling of high quality with the flexibility and diversity to meet the differing needs of children as individuals and members of the community.

The Concepts of a System

Faith in the potential of government schooling was first publicly expressed in the ACT in the Report of the Working Party on an Independent Education Authority for the Australian Capital Territory (the Currie Report).[9] This Report, produced in 1967 after twelve months discussion by an unofficial group of ACT parents, teachers, academics and others, was the first time in Australia that practical ideas of decentralisation and participative decision-making in schooling were coherently set out by a mixed group of people working in a participative process. The Report was unequivocal in its contention that government schooling could and should provide schooling of high quality to meet the differing needs of children as individuals rather than as units in a formula. The Report stated:

> The chief responsibility of an independent Education Authority in the A.C.T. should be the establishment and maintenance of a system of free government schools of a quality which would ensure for each child the

> education necessary for his full development, and which would be accepted by parents and the community generally as indeed fulfilling this function. This acceptance by parents and their sense of personal involvement with their children's education is a necessary complement to the Government's provision of good schools and well qualified teachers. Informed parental interest and participation help to ensure high standards and make easier and more rewarding the tasks of the educators and administrators.
>
> It follows from this that the education system should not be a highly centralised one, nor one which conforms to a rigid pattern, though it should certainly be a coherent one, in that it should provide logical development from one stage in education to the next, as well as correlation between the various sections.[10]

And later, summing up:

> The government system of education, then, is visualised as one of high quality, based on free schools which are largely independent and responsible: one which offers freedom of choice to parents and in which their participation is a vital element; one where the controlling Authority itself is flexible, adaptable and sympathetic.[11]

This concept of a new and different kind of school system for the ACT was advanced by the Currie Report in the form of Suggestions for Further Consideration. There followed in the six years or so between the publication of the Report in 1967 and the establishment of the Interim ACT Schools Authority at the end of 1973 a great deal more thinking and discussion about the nature of the system. These developments also are outlined in the Hughes and Mulford publication mentioned earlier. In addition, a number of other important publications contributed support and ideas to the original concept. One of these was the 1972 report by Neal and Radford, Teachers for Commonwealth Schools,[12] which in Chapter 3 outlined 'persuasive arguments' for 'involving the community more directly in decision-making on educational matters', and recommended direct representation for parents and citizens on governing bodies of schools and at other decision-making levels.

The Report of the Working Committee on Secondary Education for Canberra (the Campbell Report)[13] completed at the end of 1972 also argued for parent participation as a means of infusing 'into educational deliberations a wider range of experience and more diverse expertise than can be provided by teachers alone'.[14] They would also form a link between the colleges and the wider community, 'broaden the focus of college planning and offset any tendency to purely professional orientation in decision-making'.

The definitive document was, of course, the Report of the Assessment Panel on the ACT Education Authority, A Design for the Governance and Organization of Education in the Australian Capital Territory (the Hughes Report),[15] completed by mid-1973. By the time this Panel was established there had developed, as the Report comments, general agreement 'among interested groups - government, community and professional - on the

principles upon which the ACT education system should be based'.[16] The recommendations of the Report closely reflected this consensus on the principles, structures and approaches of an ACT system of education. The basic elements of the concept were summed up in the Information Statement, The Guiding Principles and Aims of the ACT Schools Authority (see Appendix 1), issued at the end of 1973 as one of the first acts of the newly established Interim ACT Schools Authority.

What was envisaged was a government system of education which would be of the highest quality; which would endeavour to help every child to develop fully according to his own needs, interests and capabilities; which would be open, flexible and diverse, but yet maintain the coherence, co-ordination and central guidance and decision-making necessary to ensure equal opportunity for all children and a sensible use of resources. And, as a corner-stone of such a system, the active participation of parents, together with teachers and administrators in the governance and operation of the system at all levels. In short, schooling was seen as a collaboration of parents, teachers, students, administrators and the community for the benefit of every child and all children in schools.

The Task

The task of the Interim Authority was to use the structures which had been established on the recommendations of the Hughes Report and on them begin to build a genuinely collaborative system of public schooling. It is important to emphasise that such concepts and structures of schooling represented an abrupt departure from the established Australian thinking, structures and practices. There were no precedents in Australia or even overseas for the kind of system and the kinds of relationships envisaged. In both the U.K. and the U.S., where the structures of community participation in education decision-making had existed for a long time, the reality of a collaboration between teachers and parents had not in fact developed. In both countries, the concepts behind the structures were of local government participation rather than parents, and in neither case was there thought of teacher participation.

Describing the U.K. situation, Joan Sallis writes that between the 1944 Education Act, which required primary and secondary schools to have managing or governing bodies appointed by local education authorities, and the mid-1960s 'there was little development of school government. Schools were often grouped for the purpose, in handfuls or, in a few extreme cases, hundreds. Many local councillors served on a very large number of governing bodies, and party political influence was considerable. Functions had in most cases been reduced to the formal, even merely decorative, the educational content of discussions was vestigial, and in the light of the Victorian concept of a dynamic governing body, giving the school its individuality, supporting and guiding it, one could say that the system was for the most part in a state of atrophy'.[17]

As in Australia, the pressures for change came from outside the education establishment, resulting in 1975 in the setting up of the Taylor

Committee and in 1980 in the provisions of the Education Act of 1980 which breathed new life into the system of school governing bodies and provided for representation of parents and teachers in all schools. These changes are being built in the U.K. on a long established acceptance of decentralised education and of the right of the community, however interpreted, to be involved in schooling.

In Australia, after 100 years of highly centralised schooling, a participative and collaborative system of schooling came as a new experience for all concerned. The consensus of thinking and the easy personal relationships on the Interim Authority and the enthusiasm and commitment of a great many teachers and parents in the schools offered a solid base on which to begin interpreting concepts and operating structures. But the practical difficulties also were very great. Some of these arose from circumstances; some from the fact of setting up a separate ACT system; some from a lack of real understanding of the concepts of the system, and some from institutionalised attitudes.

The Hughes Report[18] outlines some of the circumstances which preceded the setting up of the Interim Authority. The delays in establishing the Interim Authority after the Hughes Report had been completed in May 1973 and the unexpectedly speedy withdrawal of NSW from the ACT education provision imposed considerable pressures of time on the Interim Authority, particularly in the necessity to consider questions of curriculum and examinations for the new and still uncompleted secondary colleges as well as for other schools in the system. These immediate practical necessities deprived the Interim Authority of the period for quiet reflection, investigation and planning which might seem desirable before introducing a radically different system of schooling.

A second set of difficulties was inherent in the fact of establishing a Commonwealth system of education where none had previously existed and where therefore there had been no opportunity to develop the bureaucratic relationships taken for granted in the States, or the understandings of the needs of a school system as distinct from a normal department of government. To insert any kind of school system into Commonwealth departmental procedures and processes would have been difficult; to try to develop a participative system seemed at many times to border on the impossible.

To begin with, a very large number of Commonwealth departments and agencies had responsibilities affecting what the Schools Authority could and (mainly) could not do. These included the Public Service Board, the Departments of Treasury, Auditor-General, Attorney-General, Works, Capital Territory (then Interior), the National Capital Development Commission, the Commonwealth Department of Education and the Commonwealth Teaching Service. In addition, parts of the NSW Education Act of 1880,[19] particularly affecting religious education and provisions in schools, applied and still do. The results of all these separate and sometimes conflicting jurisdictions were to be seen in long processes and delays in the making of decisions essential for the operation of the system. The results were also to be seen in the large number of constraints which had to be accepted by the Interim Authority in its operations (some of which still persist) and which tended to distort the intentions and make nonsense of the participative structures.

Among the most important of these constraints were those affecting the staffing of the Schools Office and the powers of school boards.

From the first, the numbers, levels and structures of staffing approved by the Public Service Board for the Schools Office reflected departmental concepts of staffing needs rather than the actual needs - indeed demands - of developing a school system of any kind. The result was an extremely overworked staff who accomplished a great many impossibilities but could not often manage miracles. This inadequacy of staffing was a constant brake on the orderly and effective development of the system and may well continue to be so, given the financial constraints and staff ceilings of the last seven years. The shortages were particularly felt in the provision of information papers essential to proper decision-making, in the servicing of committees and, especially in the development and maintenance of communication and consultation between the Authority and the schools. In this last case, it should be recorded that the fact that the system was developed in the early stages without bitterness and dissension between schools and the Authority owes much to the dedicated and at times superhuman efforts of the few liaison officers appointed by the Interim Authority, whose task it was to explain the school concerns to the Authority and the Authority concerns and decisions to the schools.

Other constraints curtailed the powers of school boards. Important among these was the requirement for the Authority to comply with Commonwealth budgeting and accounting procedures and other regulations for the use and expenditure of public money. There was no provision for money within its budget to be passed by the Authority, with or without proper procedures, to a school board which, by its nature, was not part of the bureaucratic chain of responsibility. Nor could the device of a Commonwealth grant be used, since 'the Commonwealth could not make a grant to itself'. So the absurd anomaly existed that the Commonwealth Government could and did make grants, with minimal accounting conditions, to non-government schools, but could not do so to government schools in its own system or allow them any measure of real financial responsibility. Conversely, the Commonwealth expected any funds gathered by the system and its schools to revert to general Commonwealth revenue. This latter requirement created some early problems even with P & C funding and, of course, removed from school boards any financial incentives to use their buildings for community purposes.

The powers of school boards were further restricted and the recommendations of the Hughes Report[20] made inoperable in the area of professional staffing for schools. Here the main difficulties arose from the policies and attitudes of the newly formed ACT Teachers Federation. This was a new title for a body which had in fact existed as the ACT branch of the NSW Teachers' Federation. Policies and attitudes were closely aligned with those of the NSW parent body and these, naturally enough, reflected the conditions and attitudes of NSW centralised decision-making and of the confrontationist style of industrial relations characteristic of Australian practice. The policies of the ACT Teachers' Federation took no account of the very different concepts and of the participative structures of the ACT system and ignored the new roles and responsibilities of teachers in the decision-making process. It was unfortunate that the Interim Authority did not feel itself strong enough to withstand the industrial and other pressures which ensured that the choice and allocation of school staffs remained centralised and became a prerogative of teachers in the system.

A further effect of the policies and attitudes of the Teachers' Federation was to be seen in the expectation that teacher appointees to the Authority (or indeed to any participative body) should act as

delegates of the Federation, bound to accept and espouse the policies and decisions taken independently by the Federation. This expectation was not always fulfilled, but it remained nevertheless an underlying constraint in the process of participative decision-making. It needs to be made clear however that all these comments apply to the ACT Teachers' Federation as an organisation. They certainly did not apply to the great majority of teachers as individuals, without whose commitment and co-operation nothing at all could have been achieved. The distinction is important in that it indicates very clearly the difficulties of changing institutions to reflect changing needs and conditions.

Only those still closely involved in the operation of the ACT Schools Authority will be in a position to judge how far the constraints outlined above still apply - and perhaps what new ones may have been added. There is no doubt that, in the early development of the system, they were a constant and constantly felt hindrance to achieving the intentions on which the system had been founded.

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13. Report of the Working Committee on Secondary Education for Canberra (Chairman: R. Campbell). Canberra: AGPS, 1973.

14. Ibid., p.71.

15. Report of the Assessment Panel on the ACT Education Authority (Chairman: P.W. Hughes). A Design for the Governance and Organization of Education in the Australian Capital Territory. Canberra: AGPS, 1973.

16. Ibid., p.28.

17. Joan Sallis. New Frameworks for School Government. ACE Information Sheet.

18. Op. cit., 15, pp.19-62.

19. This Act, among other provisions, required that schools should allow clergy access for one hour per week for the purposes of religious instruction, but stipulated that no two clergy of different persuasions should be on the premises at the same time. As far as is known, this Act still applies in the ACT.

20. Op. cit. 15, pp.68-70.

Chapter 2

THE FAMILY AND THE SCHOOL

The Shaping of the Child

The concepts of the ACT school system and later its structures were based on a judgement about the rights of parents to be involved with the schooling of their children and the needs of children, teachers and schools to have them involved. Since then research has provided a solid basis of evidence which argues for close relationships between family and school.

Family and school are, for better or for worse, the two strongest influences on the development of the child and on his/her future. Yet so often the link between them is no more than the tenuous one of sharing the time of the child between specified hours of the day. Teachers know little or nothing of the home backgrounds of their pupils; parents have a hazy and often erroneous impression of what the child does at school. Ashenden et al., in an article based on the extensive research and interviews of their Home, School and Work project, sum up the situation in the following comments:

> Usually teachers know nothing about the circumstances and experience of individual students, and often know little about the general social context in which the school works. If they have ever met the parents it will have been at a parent-teacher night, which both sides regard as ritualistic. The judgements which teachers make about kids' "backgrounds" are based, therefore, on very little knowledge, a good deal of inference, and plain prejudice.
>
> But the main thing cutting teachers off from knowledge and understanding of the kids and their lives is the policy and organisation of the schools in which they meet the kids. Keeping parents out of the school is as much a matter of policy as keeping the kids in, and that is something most teachers regret, and have little control over.[1]

Yet the child is subject inescapably to the influences of both social institutions: the family and the school. The family is the child's first teacher by precept and example. Children do their initial learning within the family acquiring their early skills of body and of mind and finding out about things, people and relationships. From the family, the child inherits the material circumstances which, for the most part, determine the place and status of the family, and therefore of the child, in the society. From the family, the child also inherits a particular culture - the family culture - which comprises all those non-material things which go to make up a family's way of life within the broader culture of the society. It includes such things as the style of speaking and of language; the particular authority relationships and interpersonal relationships; values; modes of thinking and behaviour; expectations of self and of others; degrees of self-confidence; levels and aspirations of education; interests and ways of using time. In a great many cases, the culture of the family corresponds with the material circumstances, so that the socio-economic background of the family is

linked with particular modes and styles of expression, living and outlook. If research evidence is needed of the influence of the family on the child, there is no lack of it. W.F. Connell et al., for example, in their large study of city youth at the end of the 1960s commented:

> We thus come back to stress the extent of close contact in the family, the enormous inter-personal pressures it can exert. By the parents' own understandings of what is good for the children, by their own ideas of what growing up means, this pressure is directed into channels that have many loops and curves, but one common outcome: a reproduction of their own pattern of sex roles, work and family life in the next generation. The Old Adam is finally transformed into the new parent.[2]

More recently in a U.K. study of schools, Rutter et al. commented:

> As with previous studies, there was ample evidence of the immense importance of family circumstances and family relationships in shaping children's development. Indeed, these family variables were so influential that they largely accounted for the much higher rate of problems in London school children compared with the Isle of Wight.[3]

And R.W. Connell et al., reporting on the Home, School and Work Project mentioned earlier, comment:

> The evidence from our study is perfectly clear: families are very powerful institutions, and their influence over their young members registers in every part of their lives, including schooling. No sound educational strategy can ignore it.[4]

These studies are indicative of many others which leave no doubt that the influence of the family on the development of the child is both strong and enduring.

So too is the influence of the school. In the school the child makes his/her first independent contact with the wider society outside the family: with other adults, with peers, above all with different ideas and behaviours. The school, whatever its quality and style, opens up to the child new worlds of thinking, information, creativity, challenge. If school and home are congruous, the child's path is easier in that he is meeting the challenges in an environment which is not wholly alien and where the school experience reinforces as well as extends the home experience.

Where the two are incongruous, then the child is apt to become the battlefield on which the opposing influences struggle. The child finds him/herself in an alien environment where the challenges are too great and seem often to have neither sense nor relevance in the light of home experience. In these cases, there are no familiar features which can relate the home experience with the school experience. Given the development of schooling (outlined in Chapter 2) as a filtering process selecting an elite from the throng, incongruity between school and home is most likely to arise where the families are so-called 'working class',

'culturally deprived', non-middle-class. Bernstein describes the incongruity which can result:

> Teachers will have lower expectations of the children, which the children will undoubtedly fulfil. All that informs the child, that gives meaning and purpose to him outside the school, ceases to be valid and accorded significance and opportunity for enhancement within the school. He has to orient towards a different structure of meaning, whether it is in the form of reading books (Janet and John), in the form of language-use and dialect, or in the patterns of social relationships. Alternatively, the meaning structure of the school is explained to the parents and imposed upon, rather than integrated within, the form and content of their world. A wedge is progressively driven between the child as a member of a family and community, and the child as a member of a school. Either way the child is expected, and his parents as well, to drop their social identity, their way of life and its symbolic representation, at the school gate.[5]

The Outcomes

That this is true for a great many pupils in Australian schools is demonstrated in an abundance of research studies during the last ten years or more.[6] The picture which emerges is of schools which have been so strongly oriented towards academic and tertiary studies and so restricted and conditioned by public examinations that they are catering for only a small minority of their students. And it is to these students, who tend to be from the educated and better-off families, that the main concern of many teachers and the main resources of most schools are directed - to the disadvantage of other students. Students moreover tend to perform in school work according to what is expected of them, implied or explicit, so that teacher attitudes to and expectations of particular groups of students are an important factor in success or failure. The patterns of failure are often laid in the earliest years of schooling - in language or reading disabilities or in personal and social difficulties - and are reinforced year by year to the end of school life and beyond that into employment or, increasingly today, unemployment.

Thus the influence of schooling goes well beyond the personal reactions and attitudes of the pupils and even of their families. It helps to shape the nature of the society itself. School practices such as streaming and creaming; the status, implicit or explicit, accorded to different classes and groups of children; the emphasis on the academic curriculum; the hierarchy of subjects; the public examination hurdles - all of these encourage competitiveness and discourage co-operation. They entrench acceptance of the notion that some must fail. Teacher attitudes and expectations play a large part in determining those who do fail. The whole organisation of the school and its curriculum - hidden as well as overt - reflect and reinforce social stereotypes: male and

female; the successful students, the no-hopers, the trouble-makers, the middle-of-the-roaders.

> . Before I got out of school I thought I would not be able to do anything!

In one simple sentence, with pungent eloquence, this youth articulates what every educationist knows is the ultimate condemnation of any school or system of education.[7]

The school thus reflects and serves the society, but not the society as a whole - rather the dominant interests and dominant culture of the society to which the school and its teachers mainly belong. Hence the alienation from schooling of so many young people to whom the school attitudes and values are unsympathetic and meaningless. This alienation of a significant number of students from their school life has also been well documented in the research studies mentioned previously. For such children, school then often becomes an aridity of time which has to be spent with docility, resignation, resentment or rejection. To leave school as soon as possible becomes the prime aim, and a job - any job, however unpleasant or dreary - is preferable to spending further time at school.

Towards New Opportunities

If the prime purpose of schooling is the final selection of a limited academic elite and, at appropriate rungs in the ladder, the progressive shedding of students to the jobs/unemployment/social status ordained for them by the society, then the patterns and practices of schooling as they have stood for a long time will do this more or less efficiently. If, however, as all the social and political rhetoric affirms, the Australian society is concerned to ensure that every child has the opportunity and the help he needs to develop his capacities and interests as fully as he can or wishes to do, then there needs to be fundamental change in the purposes and organisation of schooling. And a first step must be to bring the two influences of home and school into collaboration rather than into conflict. In 1973, the Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission commented:

> ... education in formal institutions, separated from both the home and the world of work, has proved to be an inadequate means of changing patterns of social stratification or of initiating all young people into society. Unless our conception of education broadens to enable schools to forge closer links with other socialising agencies, the possibility of providing equal life chances for children from all types of social backgrounds is severely limited.[8]

In the last decade teachers and parents, schools and school systems have begun to forge these links, but the process has still a long way to go before mutual understanding and respect become the normal relationships between teachers and parents - so that the school experience for

every child - and not just for a few - can build on, extend and interpret the home experience in a wider context. Such a relationship is based on the unspoken premise that the school and the family are united in wishing to ensure the best interests of the child. This does not necessarily mean that they agree on what his best interests are or on the best ways of achieving them. But it does mean that the prime interest of both institutions focuses on the welfare of the child. The capacity of schools to teach effectively depends on what happens in the families of their pupils - on whether the family understands and supports the school.

And even minimal collaboration between school and home can make a difference, as is demonstrated in a study undertaken between May 1976 and September 1979 in the London borough of Harringay.[9] In the study, three groups of children were selected from six infant and six junior schools to take part in an experiment in collaboration between teachers and parents to improve the reading ability of the children. The schools were all inner-city, working-class and multi-racial. In many homes, the parents could not speak English. One group of children acted as a control; a second was given some extra teaching of reading by the teacher at school; in the third, the parents of the children were asked to hear them read at home. For this last group there was considerable collaboration and personal contact between teachers and parents.

The study found unequivocally that the children who had read to their parents at home, even when the parents themselves could not speak English, had improved significantly over the other two groups. Most parents expressed great satisfaction in being involved in this way by the schools, and teachers reported that the children showed an increased keenness for learning at school and were better behaved. The teachers involved also found the contact with parents worthwhile and continued to involve them subsequently. They found that involvement of parents in this one activity led to home support of other classroom activities related to literacy. The following sentence sums up the findings of the report:

> The present findings show that these pupils do respond when the efforts of both teachers and parents are collaboratively planned by the school.[10]

Fundamentally, the concept of collaboration between school and family rests on a view of education as a participative process of teaching and learning directed towards the best development of the child. In this view, the child is not a passive receptacle for prescribed information purveyed by the school but an active agent in the process. Differences between students do matter. How the child learns is as important as what he learns and both are influenced by the person he/she is. It is then impossible to divorce the child from his own background and from his/her experience out of school as well as within. The child at school is also the child in the family and in a variety of community situations and relationships. Schooling is thus one part of a total process of learning and development which is distinct and individual for each child but which must yet fit into the context of the society as a whole. Given the fact that parent/family influence on the child is a powerful one which can support or render ineffective the efforts of the school, it must clearly be to the benefit of the child if the influence and guidance he receives from home and school are complementary and co-operative rather than separate and possibly conflicting. It may also be to the benefit of the school and its teachers and to the ease of

relationships within the school to have pupils who feel that they are valued and respected as individuals with individual identities.

The Social Impetus

There are other reasons for encouraging closer relationships between school and family in the circumstances of today. One is the fact that parents are becoming less and less content to be excluded from knowledge of and influence on the schooling of their children; that in the last decade or so they have, largely through parent organisations, begun to demand a right to be involved in a process which affects them and their children so fundamentally. These pressures for involvement in schooling are reflected in the changes which have been occurring in school systems and schools during the last ten years, stimulated and supported by the active policies and the resources of the Schools Commission. Thus school councils comprising parents and teachers now operate in the ACT, South Australia and Victoria, are being established in the Northern Territory and considered in Tasmania. In the ACT, NSW and, most recently, Victoria parents participate along with teachers and others in the policy and government of the system. In the Northern Territory, an Advisory Committee gives parents at least an opportunity to influence the decision-making of the system at the top levels.

These developments in the main have been the result of external pressures by parent organisations and Schools Commission policies on established systems and practices, though it must be said that the changes could not have come so quickly or been so widespread if there had not also been within schools and departments teachers and administrators who saw educational value in the decentralisation of decision-making and the involvement of parents in schooling.

These changes in the traditional patterns of schooling have been taking place as part of a wider social trend towards more active participation in democratic processes. As in other countries, the Australian community generally has become less willing to see 'democracy' as being restricted to the periodic election of governments at various levels. There has been an increasing tendency to question established authority and processes; to debunk the mystique attaching to long-established and high-status institutions like the professions, and to look for means of directly influencing policy and decision-making. Where structures and processes have discouraged participation, other methods have evolved. The demonstrations which originated with radical groups in the 1960s have become an accepted mode even for groups as conservative as farmers. Non-government organisations have sprung up in large numbers to influence policy and decision-making in issues such as aboriginal affairs, environmental and consumer protection, the abolition of abortion, women's rights, standards in schooling. Occupying a special place in these trends are the media which have increasingly offered a channel for criticism and complaints and for the expression and reiteration of particular viewpoints. The media in the post-war years have developed an influential and sometimes decisive role in the formulation of public opinion and in the shaping of policies. They are an important element in the social context within which demands for parent and community influence on schooling have developed. And they are the channel for public criticism of schooling.

Criticism of schooling is a fact of our time; and not only in Australia. Speaking of Europe, Vanbergen comments:

> The school is not having an easy time. Criticised from without and challenged from within, it is the focus of mounting protest and discontent; and it is not unusual for stricture to become transformed into accusation. Is there a single charge that has not been brought against it at some time or other in the past 15 years? Never in its history has the school as an institution been on such irritable terms with its surroundings.[11]

Criticism of schooling is the obverse of expectation. It is provoked when expectations about schools and their purposes are not met or are inadequately met. Criticisms, however, to not necessarily imply clear or consistent or practicable expectations in the mind of the critic. Sometimes, they are no more than a peg on which to hang an expression of general disquiet with schooling or even with the state of the society itself.

In fact, schools are now bearing the brunt of community confusion and uncertainty about social aims and directions and how to cure social and economic problems. In the casting around for causes and remedies, the schools have come under increasing attack from a wide variety of sources. There would appear to be substantial agreement in the community that the schools are failing to do their job adequately. There is little agreement, however, on what their job is or should be, what constitutes failure and what should be done about it. The controversies centre on:

- what is being taught in schools;
- how it is being taught;
- the role of the schools in social problems and issues such as unemployment, social inequality and disadvantage.

Criticisms of schooling come from a variety of sources. Employers complain that schools are failing to teach literacy, numeracy and the work ethic; university personalities deplore an alleged decline in standards and quality in education upsetting to upholders of academic excellence; politicians see school curricula as irrelevant to the labour market and as encouraging permissiveness, unrealistic expectations and disdain of work. Much of this criticism, as the research demonstrates, stems from widespread ignorance in the community of what schools are doing and trying to do. But the research also shows that there is a considerable relationship between knowledge of schools and levels of satisfaction with schools. Those who are most closely in contact with schools are least likely to subscribe uncritically to media criticism of them. In addition, parents overwhelmingly are reported as wanting to know more about what their children are doing at school. Closer acquaintance with schools and collaboration between school and family provide a powerful shield against public criticism of schooling. It brings parent power to the support of teachers on education issues of common concern.

These are some of the social considerations which argue for closer home/school relationships; but the central concern remains the interests of the child. Collaboration between home and school simply recognises

the essential relationships between the family and the school in the learning and development of the child.

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Chapter 3

CONCEPTS OF COLLABORATION

Parent Involvement

It is possible, and even common for people to accept the need for closer relationship between school and family and yet to have very different concepts of what these relationships are and what they encompass. If the objective is to be the development of new relationships between parents and teachers which recognise that each has a contribution to make towards the educational benefit of children, then it is important to explore the conceptual basis on which such relationships can be developed.

The links which have been developing in the last decade between school and family are commonly referred to as 'parent involvement' - a vague enough term which can cover anything from the signing of a cheque for school fees through day-to-day contacts between parents and schools to parent participation in decision-making in and about schooling. Somewhere in the range of concepts included in parent involvement is 'choice': the right of parents to choose the schooling they want for their children. This is certainly a right which parents should have, and it has been built in to the ACT system. Yet if, as appears to be a current Australian trend, 'choice' is elevated in importance from its rightful position as a mere safeguard to being the prime expression of parent concern with schooling, then it can limit and even negate the development of productive relationships between home and school.

'Choice' of itself implies no more than a finite transaction between the buyer and seller of goods; between the chooser and the purveyor of choice. It sees schools in terms of 'buying' and 'selling', if not literally at least metaphorically: the parent/student 'buying' or 'choosing' the product from among offered options; the school 'selling' its particular brand of product. In the transaction, the relationship, such as it is, is a static one. The customer buys ready-packaged schooling, choosing as far as he can on the information offered him (and on the length of his purse in some cases) the brand which approximates what he thinks he wants or needs. As an individual, he has no influence on the design or contents of the packages and may not in fact be offered much genuine choice apart from the shape, size and colour of the package.

In other words, it is a one-way transaction in which the product is decided impersonally by the relevant authorities either to cater for the greatest possible number (as in mass produced schooling) or for particular target groups to which the seller, for a variety of reasons of his own, wishes to appeal (as in many non-government schools). Change in the product comes about slowly and only in response to overall market pressure - not to the differing needs of individuals. The customer may or may not have genuine choice. Beyond the choice he/she has neither influence nor responsibility.

Influence and responsibility are key elements in any relationship between teachers and parents which is likely to make the outcomes of schooling more equitable socially and more effective educationally. Without these on both sides, the relationship is a token one. A third important element is that the relationship is a personal one. Added

together, these three elements constitute a relationship of collaboration - a working together towards a common end which is the educational benefit of children in schools. The elements which constitute collaboration are also the elements of a developing concept of the relationship between the professional and the client.

Parents and Professionals

Two main kinds of relationships can commonly exist between the professional and the client. Both are based on the fact that the client has needs and wishes which can be met by the skills, knowledge and understandings of the professional. Both involve relationships which are personal and individual.

In one kind of relationship, the professional prescribes what he sees to be 'good' or 'right; for his client. Consultation is likely to be minimal; explanation or justification non-existent. The client is a 'case' and is labelled appropriately. The client accepts the prescription (whether medicine, a house design, a law suit or a school curriculum) because the 'expert knows'. The extent to which the prescription fits the needs and wishes of the client will depend on how far the professional's knowledge and experience give him an intuitive understanding of the client's circumstances beyond his diagnosed needs.

This kind of benevolent professionalism has been the pattern of professional/client relationship in Australian for a long time, and it still widely persists. It accounts in part for the high levels of dissatisfaction expressed by people whose architects have built them unsuitable houses, or whose doctors have ignored background circumstances affecting their condition, or whose lawyers have not fully grasped the complexities of their particular case, or whose schools have provided little that was relevant to their needs.

These levels of dissatisfaction, together with the more active interest in democratic institutions, have been producing considerable changes in the relationships which clients expect to have with their professional advisers. Fewer people these days are prepared to accept unquestioningly the advice, pronouncements or actions of their professional experts. Conversely, more professional experts, particularly those who are capable and confident in their expertise, are seeing the relationship as a much more complex process involving a recognition that the client has an important contributory role in finding the solution to meet his needs. It takes collaborative effort

- to distinguish between wishes and genuine needs
- to identify the needs clearly
- to review the methods of meeting the needs
- to choose the best options and to make realistic compromises.

Only when this has been done can the particular expertise of the professional be brought to bear on the required action.

Roy Grounds, perhaps Australia's most eminent architect, once remarked that in order to design an appropriate house for a client, the architect should ideally go and live in his client's household for six months. This expresses succinctly the most effective kind of relationship between the professional and his client. It is to be contrasted with the comment by Ashenden et al., quoted earlier, that 'usually teachers know nothing about the circumstances and experience of individual students ...'. The ideal described by Grounds is not practicable - in schooling or in most other endeavours; but the development of collaborative relationships between school and home offers opportunity for teachers and parents to work together in their endeavour to meet the differing needs of children. The object of such collaboration is to produce in each school a learning environment in which the worlds of formal scholarship and creativity are brought into relationship with the family and the community from which the child comes; in brief, it is to fit the schooling to the child, rather than the child to the schooling. In the process, the relationship between teachers and parents is built by mutual effort into one of mutual respect based on an understanding that each has a valuable but quite different contribution to make to the education of the children involved - and beyond that to the education of all children.

Collaboration

The collaboration of parents and teachers in the ACT school system was a cornerstone of its original intent and design, and this is reflected in the decision-making structures established by the ACT Schools Authority Ordinance. But neither design nor structures of themselves ensure effective working relationships. These must be based in the first instance on an understanding that the relationships are new ones. In a centralised and hierarchical school system, relationships are to a large extent pre-determined by position in the structure or outside the structure. Everyone knows his/her place and area of responsibility and power - or lack of it.

In a participative system such as that in the ACT, the relationships are of more importance than recognised position, and they need to be developed in sympathy with the underlying concepts and purposes of the system. Insofar as the centralised relationships and attitudes are imported into a participative system, by so far will the collaborative relationships be constrained and distorted. And this applies to within school operations as to the administrative operations of the system as a whole.

Collaboration is not an end in itself; nor should it be an excuse for setting up new structures which will do little more than serve new vested interests. It is a means towards achieving education which will be appropriate in quality and character to both the common and the differing needs of children in a changing society. It implies a recognition of the need for diversity, flexibility and personal concern in schooling, and of the fact that the school is as much a part of the community as the pupils for whom it caters.

Chapter 4

PARTICIPATIVE DECISION-MAKING

The Participative Process

Collaboration can take many forms and express itself in many different ways, reflecting differing needs and differing contributions among the parents, teachers and students of different schools. But in a participative system such as the ACT school system, collaboration begins with participation by parents and teachers in the decision-making of the school and the system. Participation involves a sharing of power and, of equal importance, a sharing of responsibility for decisions taken. In this way it is quite distinct from other forms of influence on schooling such as that exerted through the media or expressed in terms such as 'choice' or 'accountability' all of which attempt to exert power from outside and accept no responsibility for outcomes. Participation provides opportunity for influence from within rather than from outside; it provides opportunity also for understanding the circumstances and the issues behind decision-making and compels due regard to consequences.

The process of participation decision-making is not an easy one. Effective participation does not rely simply on counting votes and implementing a majority decision. As Phillip Hughes expressed it in the inaugural Currie lecture in 1977:

> We are attempting a much more difficult situation, a new recognition that all the individuals involved with this process of education have a contribution of their own to make, a contribution both with respect to knowledge and values. Thus we seek for a teacher, not the old concept of professionalism which was of restriction, of exclusion, of a secret code of knowledge if you wish, but the professionalism which comes from service and the willingness and the ability to make use of a variety of resources and people and not from an attitude of restriction. The whole thrust of our system is to give means of expression for a variety of views leading to decision so that I stress again that conflict is a necessary part of participation, the recognition of the existence of genuine differences.
>
> Equally, of course, the resolution of conflict, some form of compromise is necessary to participation. We are not involved in an abdication of decision-making, in some sort of free for all where it is always automatically, simply, a matter of counting the vote. We must involve the contributions of research, the contributions of specialised knowledge. If we are working towards compromise then it ought not to be the easy way out but the best way out, and compromise becomes a much more difficult thing. It would be easy if decision were just a matter on any occasion of sitting down and counting heads and saying we have 51% for and 49% against so we go for

> it. But I believe we are involved in a much more difficult process where we really are prepared to sit and listen to other people, where we are prepared to get the best advice, where we are prepared to look at what the research has to say.[1]

This kind of decision-making involves tension and compromise among the participants, but also mutual respect. Above all, it requires a mutual confidence that all the participants, whatever their views, are motivated by the common purpose of the educational benefit of children in schools. The confidence that this is the primary motivation of all participants is an essential basis for an effective process of participation.

This is not to say that community participation does not have its own disadvantage and problems. It makes decision-making slower, more cumbersome and less administratively efficient. It does not fit well with authoritarian social objectives, attitudes, structures and processes all of which may operate to constrain the effectiveness of a participative process of decision-making. More importantly, participative decision-making introduces greater opportunities than does bureaucratic decision-making (at least in Australia) for the pursuit of self-interest or sectional interests which may be incompatible with the proper welfare of children in schools. Participative decision-making can bring very different values and interests to bear on the decision-making process, unless care is taken to ensure that those participating have as their primary interest the educational benefit of children in schools in the system.

There are many community groups who have a legitimate interest in schooling: employers, unions, tertiary institutions, ethnic/cultural groups, churches, other groups pressing a special cause such as road safety, drug or sex education or the banning of these, environmental preservation, particular views of ethics, morality and ideology. But these groups, by reason of their own prime interests, are chiefly concerned with the outcomes of schooling, not with the educational benefit of the students in the process. It may for particular reasons and occasions be appropriate or desirable to include some of these groups in some aspects of school decision-making, but it needs to be recognised that an interest in the outcomes of schooling for a particular purpose will not always - perhaps not often - be identical with a prime interest in the educational benefit of students.

Outside the educational structures, one group alone in the society can claim to have a prime interest the educational benefit of children in schools: the parents of those children. This is not a claim that parents are universally concerned about children, wise in their views on schooling and disinterested when they seek to participate. But it can reasonably be said that parents of children at school, taken by and large as a group in the community, will be more truly interested in the welfare of children at school than any other community group.

The participation by parents and others in decision-making introduces a new element into what has always been - and still remains to a large extent even in the ACT - a bureaucratic process of a hierarchical nature which culminates in the final responsibility and power of the appropriate Minister.[2] Participation of parents allows a share in decision-making to persons who are not employed by the system and are therefore outside its chain of responsibility. It gives rise, therefore, to a number of

practical issues and difficulties. Some of these, like the composition and selection of decision-making bodies have already been resolved in the ACT by Ordinance. Others remain as continuing or perennial issues. Among these are issues which arise from exaggerated or unrealistic expectations of what participative decision-making can accomplish. This is often due to an unclear perception of the constraints on an education system, even when this is administered under a statutory authority. Other issues arise from the participative process itself and from the need for parents and other participants to conform with some essential requirements of the operation of government.

At the same time, there is a continuing need to ensure that decisions taken are as far as possible contributing to the principles and aims of the system of schooling rather than to other ends which many seem pragmatic or expedient or economical at the time but which cumulatively change the character of the system from personal and participative to impersonal and centralised.

Much of the tension and suspicion which these issues can generate can be dissolved if parents and others new to participative decision-making and the operations of government have a basic understanding of how a statutory authority operates or can operate and of the kinds of practical issues which are likely to arise. The following sections of this Chapter are excerpts from a previous paper on parent participation[3] which attempts to outline the statutory authority, it processes and practical issues in general terms. They do not focus on the ACT Schools Authority and those currently involved with the ACT system will need to judge how far they are relevant to the ACT.

The Statutory Authority

The structures of centralised education systems do not allow easily for participation by parents in decision-making. Consequently, new structures have had to be established or old ones adapted. In most cases, this has been done by using the form of a statutory authority - sometimes called a semi-autonomous authority and on occasion derisively referred to as a QANGO (quasi-autonomous non-government organisation).

If a 'hybrid' is, as the Oxford Dictionary insists, the offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar, a statutory authority may be aptly described as a hybrid, springing from a government department and a private undertaking. It inherits the characteristics of both parents but, in individual cases, favours one side rather than the other. Statutory authorities have grown in popularity in the post-war period to the point where Senate Committees of the Federal Parliament spend long days in trying to count them and express continuing distress at their proliferation.

Statutory authorities are used as a means of managing on behalf of government undertakings which require more independence and flexibility of operation than may be easily provided within a departmental structure. Often these undertakings are of a commercial nature - airlines, telecommunications, electricity/power provision; some are to be found in the

planning and environmental areas, in the arts, in broadcasting and television. In the last decade they have been established for various responsibilities in schooling at the national level (Schools Commission), at the State/Territory level (ACT Schools Authority and NSW Education Commission). In Victoria, School Councils also have their own Act, but because they operate at the school level much of what applies at State or national levels is not relevant to them.

The Autonomy of a Statutory Authority

A statutory authority is one established by an Act of Parliament (or by Ordinance in the ACT) which sets out in a varying amount of detail the responsibilities and obligations of the statutory body. The statutory body is responsible to an appropriate Minister but, theoretically at least, enjoys more independence than an orthodox department for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the relationship of the statutory body with its Minister is different from that of the Department and the Minister. A Department exists to serve and service its Minister who is its public mouthpiece. The Department provides the Minister with information and advice and carries out his decisions and the government's policies. Through its advice and expertise, it can certainly exert a strong influence on the views of its Minister and the policies of the government. Nevertheless, its loyalty and responsibility are directly to the Minister. It has no direct responsibility to the public (except such responsibilities as may be deemed basic to a democracy). Advice and information are confidential to the Minister and what is released to the public will be in accordance with Ministerial views and government policies.

A statutory body, on the other hand, has by its nature a dual responsibility: to carry out the purposes set out in its Act or charter; to the designated Minister and the Government. The emphasis placed on the first responsibility as against the second varies with the statutory body itself, with the particular outlook of its members and with the degree of controversy which may attach to its undertaking.

In some cases, the charter of the statutory body properly adhered to or interpreted may well bring it into conflict with the views of the Minister or the policies of the government. In the final analysis, the decision and the power rest with the Minister, but it is quite likely that much of the argument leading up to the final decision will have been conducted in the public arena and the Minister's final decision will be quite clearly and publicly an over-ruling of the responsible statutory body. In some cases, of which the Schools Commission is a good example, the statutory body is required by its Act to produce a public report which the Minister is required to table in the parliament. The matters on which the statutory body is actually required to report may, as with the Schools Commission Act, be quite restricted. Nevertheless, the requirement gives the statutory body the opportunity - if it so wishes - to present its own considered views and judgements whether or not these are consistent with Ministerial views and government policies.

This capacity of statutory bodies to present a case publicly and

independently of government is an important distinction between the statutory body and the Department. It allows direct information to the public and theoretically (but not always in practice) obliges the Minister or government to justify rejection of the considered views of the responsible body. Whether the statutory body accepts the opportunity or sees a need for an independent viewpoint is another matter. It is by no means uncommon for statutory bodies to operate as though they were in fact departments of Ministers.

The independence of the statutory body can be constrained in other respects also. Theoretically, such a body should be able to design its own appropriate structures, employ its own staff and deploy its resources as it sees fit, subject to adequate public accountability and auditing. In practice, its levels of staffing will be governed by staff ceilings and its staffing structures will generally be subject to Public Service Board jurisdiction. This may impose departmental classifications and position responsibilities which may or may not be appropriate to the particular undertaking. In many cases also, particularly in school education at any level, the statutory body will not be its own employer but will draw on the public service for administrative staff, making its staff interchangeable within the public service and subject to public service procedures for selection, promotion, appeals, deployment and so on. Furthermore, if its staff are not recruited directly for the purpose but are career public servants, they may find it difficult to overcome habits of thinking and operation and adapt to less orthodox procedures and more independent stances. This can be particularly evident where parent participation is concerned.

Further restrictions on independence can arise in the area of financial allocation and accounting. The level of financial allocation like staff celings is an obvious source of constraint. But it may also be more difficult for a statutory body to prove its case to the Treasury for particular funding, if the funding is to be used for purposes or in ways which are unfamiliar to officials used to departmental operations and for which there are no precedents. As a corollary, it may also be difficult to convince the Auditor-General of the need for flexibility in funding or for unorthodox procedures for disbursing funds. It has, for example, been found difficult in some areas to devise acceptable methods of delegating significant financial responsibility to school councils, though with time and patience these constraints can be overcome.

Other kinds of constraints which operate on departments (as discussed in Chapter 2) can apply also to statutory bodies in varying degrees. Among these may be the roles and responsibilities of other departments such as Works and Health. Of particular importance for the statutory body are the pressures which come from industrial/professional organisations and from public/media criticism. In the first case, the external pressures which operate on departments can be even more effective in participative decision-making in spite or because of the fact that the professionals themselves are participants. In the second case, the public and the media are likely to have greater access to information on which to base criticism and controversy and influence the decisions of the statutory body.

Another constraining factor needs to be taken into account. The Minister takes his advice not only, and sometimes not principally, from the statutory body, but from his own department or his own staff advisers or from other sources. All of these will have their own interests and views. On particular issues, the advice of the Minister's department, for example,

may differ markedly for a variety of reasons from that of the responsible statutory body. If the Minister is inclined to prefer the advice of the department, it then becomes possible for the department to exercise an ongoing surveillance of and influence on the statutory body and its operations.

Finally, a statutory body is generally governed by a Council/Board/Committee; that is, a group of persons, many of them drawn from outside the statutory body, officially appointed by the Government (generally in the name of the Governor-General or the Governor). The kinds of persons chosen and the methods of selection can influence the independence or otherwise of the statutory body. By judicious selection, a government can, from the beginning or over time, determine the character and views of a statutory body so that its policies and methods of operation become fully acceptable to government. As a last resort, a government may by an Act of Parliament abolish the statutory body altogether.

It is important that these potential constraints on the autonomy of a statutory body be appreciated by those who participate in its decision-making so that expectations of what can be achieved are realistic and so that idealism is not lost in frustration.

The Division of Responsibility

The hybrid nature of a statutory authority is perhaps most apparent in ambiguous divisions of responsibility. The responsibility and loyalty of a department are quite clearly to and through the appropriate Minister; the responsibility of the private undertaking is to its particular purpose (whether this is profit, philanthropy, research, organising the local tennis club or the football season). The statutory authority is divided between two responsibilities; to its purpose and to its Minister, and the two may sometimes or even frequently be in conflict. Similarly, its structures are neither completely public service nor completely within its own jurisdiction, since they introduce the wild card of community participation. Thus divisions of responsibility can be a continuing and changing source of tension: between the statutory authority and the government and within the statutory authority itself. The latter is clearly illustrated in the position of the Council.

A representative Council may be the controlling body for a statutory authority in its own right (as with the Schools Commission and the ACT Schools Authority); or it may be an adjunct to a department (as is the case with the NSW Education Commission). Whatever the position, difficulties may arise in relationships between the Council and the professional employees.

The division of responsibility between the Council and the executive/administration is most likely to give rise to difficulties at the system or national level. Here the Council is in a kind of limbo between the Minister on the one hand and, on the other, the head of the executive/administration, who may be variously titled Director (the term to be used in this discussion), Director-General, Chairman (where appropriate), or Chief Education Officer. In a sense, the Council partakes of the functions

of both the Minister and the Director, but has the clear-cut authority of neither. The executive/administration is responsible for informing and advising the Council in much the same way as a departmental head informs and advises a Minister, but at the same time the Council is much more closely involved in the operation of the statutory authority than a Minister normally is or should be.

The Director is also in a less certain position than is the head of a department. He will generally be a member of the Council and sometimes its Chairman, but he also has the responsibilities of a departmental head. He thus has a dual role: one which requires him to be at the same time a member of the Council and its servant; and a second dual role which requires him to be a member of an independent Council and at the same time to maintain, to a greater or lesser degree, a public service relationship with the Minister. These dual roles are not easy to maintain with balance and integrity. There will be occasions when the Director, for a variety of good reasons, must as executive head oppose the wishes of the Council; and other occasions when, as a member of the Council, he must oppose the wishes of the Minister.

The difficulties will be exacerbated if the Council or some members of it expect to assume the powers and responsibilities of the executive head and interfere unreasonably with the operation of the executive/ administration. They will also be exacerbated if the Minister in his expectations does not recognise a difference between a statutory authority and a department, and seeks to interfere in the operation of the Council or the authority generally.

Usually, a statutory authority operates on a rough division of responsibility: the Council being responsible for major policy decisions and directions; the Director, for implementation. But, of course, in such a division there is considerable room for overlap. It is not always easy to distinguish what is major and what is detail; and often the way in which a decision is implemented is as important as the fact that it is implemented. There is no definitive line which can be drawn. Each statutory authority is faced with the task of working out a reasonable division of authority within the terms of its Act; and even so the situation is likely to change as circumstances and personalities change. It is not easy for a Council to strike a balance between being a rubber stamp to what is essentially a departmental operation, and itself attempting to usurp the Director's role. Nevertheless, it is a balance which can be achieved with good sense and good will and provided there is mutual confidence that all concerned have a primary interest in the educational benefit of children in school. The alternatives to achieving such a balance are an ineffectual Council or a demoralised administration.

The Effectivess of the Council

In its decision-making, the Council is very largely dependent on the executive/administration for research, information and advice, and this needs to be adequate, balanced and, just as importantly, appropriately presented. There is no surer way to produce an ineffectual Council than to drown its members in a sea of detailed papers. The detail needs to be available if required, but the papers which present the issues and the options need to be clear and concise. They also need to be and to be seen

to be impartial, fairly setting out possible decisions and their implications. If the information presented to Council is inadequate, inappropriate or slanted, the Council may well come to feel or suspect that its decisions are being conditioned by the service it receives.

Being an active participant in a decision-making body, particularly at State or national levels where the issues are complex and the consequences far-reaching, requires a considerable amount of time; and there is no real way round this. The time involved in meetings can be kept to a minimum if the Chairman is competent and the information for Council well presented. Beyond this, attempts to curtail the time needed by participants will generally result in less effective participation by the Council or by some members of it. For example, reducing the number of Council meetings will inevitably mean a less actively informed and effective Council. Similarly, the delegation of the Council's responsibility to a small executive committee will reduce the power and information of the Council as a whole and may well negate the whole purpose of participative decision-making.

Time at formal Council meetings can be saved substantially if a system of standing or ad hoc committees and working parties is used, involving members of Council in areas of their greatest interest. In this way, major and contentious issues can be argued in a less formal situation and without taking up the time of the entire Council. The recommendations of these Committees are then considered by the Council as an important input to making decisions. Even if these Committees cannot reach agreement on some issues, at least the precise nature of the contention will have been identified. A further advantage is that the Committees offer opportunity to involve in the discussion of issues a variety of persons who are not members of the Council; not only persons within the statutory authority itself, but also parents and other persons in the community with relevant interests and expertise.

It has to be recognised, however, that the Committee system if it is to be effective, requires adequate servicing by the executive/administration in the form of information and research as well as the usual minute takers and other clerical support. Without this, the Committees can easily degenerate into 'talking shops' for the airing of opinions and prejudices rather than for productive discussion. The Council must decide whether and in what circumstances such Committees justify the resources they take.

Confidentiality and Public Comment

The information used by an orthodox department in decision-making and in advice to the Minister is confidential to that department. What is released to the public will be what the Minister authorises for release, and it will be presented in a way approved by the Minister. The Council of a statutory authority does not have the same undivided loyalty to a Minister. Its operations, by the nature of a representative Council, will be much more public and some of its members will in fact have the responsibility of reporting back to their organisations. Inevitably, two questions arise:

- Is there any need for confidentiality and, if so, in what circumstances?
- Who should be entitled to make public comment on issues, particularly issues of controversy?

There are two ways of putting the question on release of information:

- What information should not be released to the public?

or

- What should we tell them?

On the whole, Australian governments and bureaucracies find it easier and more advantageous to ask the second question rather than the first. Partly this has been due to the centralised structures of decision-making and the lack of community involvement generally; partly to sensitivity and defensiveness against possible criticism, and partly to the fact that information is a source of power and sometimes status. There are some areas of government where secrecy and confidentiality may be justified (defence, foreign affairs), though perhaps to a lesser degree than the practice warrants. Education is not one of these areas. It is by nature a social process and an area of social concern. Parent participation in decision-making is predicated on the right and need for parents and the community to know and influence what happens in the schools. This right and this need belong to all parents and community and are not restricted to those who actually participate. It should be accepted as a principle that all those concerned in schooling, as well as the public generally, should be as fully informed on developments, issues and decisions as frankness, openness of operation and clarity of reporting can make them. For the statutory authority accepting this principle, the question is therefore:

- What information should not be released to the public?

Inevitably there will arise issues and decisions where confidentiality is either mandatory or highly desirable. Confidentiality should be mandatory where, for example, the information may affect the privacy or reputation of individuals; or where the premature release of information may be detrimental to the interests of the school system as a whole or of schools within the system (for example, levels of finance or staffing). Confidentiality should also be mandatory where it is required by protocol or courtesy. For example, an official report would not be released before copies have been presented to the Minister and/or to other parties who may be concerned. Similarly, as a matter of diplomacy as well as courtesy, decisions affecting particular schools or communities or persons would not be made public before they are made known to and preferably fully discussed with those affected. Closure of schools is a good example in this area, though it is to be hoped that the decision itself would not have been taken without the closest and continuing consultations with those affected and concerned.

Confidentiality may be highly desirable in some situations where the possibility or probability of public controversy may jeopardise negotiations (for example, in industrial matters), or lead to confusion and misunderstanding. In the latter case, an example might be a Council paper presenting a full range of options for decision-making, including for completeness some which would not seriously be considered but which could give rise to public fears.

Given the premise of frankness and openness of operation, the need for

confidentiality in certain matters should be

- individually identified for and by the Council
- explicitly justified
- agreed by all members of Council
- given a defined period for confidentiality or scheduled for review of confidentiality.

Once agreed, confidentiality has to be adhered to by all participants if the Council is to operate with any credibility. The needs or wishes of organisations or groups outside the Council should not be allowed to determine a participant's adherence to agreed confidentiality.

It does nevertheless need to be recognised that confidentiality can breed further confidentiality leading to secrecy. In all cases, it will be a matter of judgement to determine whether confidentiality is justified, and the decision should not be based on convenience; on a conscious or unconscious desire for power and importance among participants; or on fear of public controversy or criticism. A Council adopting openness of information and operation as a principle may well find itself in continual hot water is the early stages, simply because the media and the public at large are unused to being treated with frankness; are unused to having reasons given and mistakes admitted. The newsworthiness is unlikely to last, at least in so far as the media are concerned. What is open to all as a matter of routine does not make headlines, but it does give opportunity to the interested public to be better informed and more constructively critical.

The second question of Who should make public comment? is concerned with devising procedures which will avoid confusion and the kind of controversy which rises from confusion. Prepared public statements on sensitive issues would normally be agreed by the whole Council, but there are many occasions when urgency does not permit this. In these cases, it is useful to have a spokesman for the Council identified beforehand - generally, the Chairman and/or the Director. Other members of Council who may, because of their particular positions, be forced to make public statement on particular issues should as a matter of courtesy inform the Chairman and/or the Council either beforehand or as soon after as is practicable. The statements made in these circumstances should be consistent with the responsibilities of a participant and not designed to add fuel to controversy.

Parent Representation

The ideal of participative democracy is a community so small that every member can directly and personally participate in the decisions made by and for the community. It is a long time since Western societies have been of a size to permit this kind of participative decision-making and in education there are few schools so small that all parents/students and teachers can be decision-makers in a direct and personal way. Our democracies rely on representation to provide a means of participation in

decision-making for the community as a whole and it would seem to be also the most practicable method for school communities - parents, students and teachers. Representation does not, however, remove the responsibility of parents to participate in other ways in school processes and activities or of the schools to encourage such participation, as will be discussed later.

Representation is a means of allowing a share in decision-making to larger numbers of people than can easily participate directly. The aim of representation is to replace all those who have a right to participate by one or more persons selected by them to present, explain and argue for the wishes and needs of those whom they represent. If representation is to be genuine participation of the many through the few, then a number of conditions need to be met. These are:

- the representatives must be chosen by those whom they represent;
- the 'views' of the representatives must be consistent with those of the persons they represent;
- those who are represented must be kept informed of decisions being taken and the reasons for them.

These conditions require some elaboration. If indirect participation through representation is to mean anything at all, then the representatives cannot be imposed on parents from above (for example, by Ministerial choice) or from outside by the random choice of education agencies or decision-making bodies themselves. Parents must select the persons they wish to represent their views.

Nor is it a simple matter for anyone to represent the 'views of parents', particularly in a multicultural society where the 'views' are diverse and the society itself in a state of evolution and rapid change. The differing views of individual parents need to go through a participative process of discussion, argument and counter-argument, so as to distil from the mass of diverse experiences and individual cases an appreciation of common concepts and issues and an identification of the social and education principles and aims which underlie them. From this application of principle to issues emerge 'policies' and on the basis of policies decision and action can be taken on specific issues and cases. Policies are thus the 'views' of many parents working together to produce a common considered 'view'. This is not an easy process (and some of the difficulties will be discussed later), but it is fundamental to effective and fair representation and participation.

The third essential part of the process of representation is the communication back by the representatives to those whom they represent. This is not just a matter of courtesy or the satisfaction of curiosity and interest. If those represented are to share in the understanding and insights which come from participation in the responsibility of decision-making; if they are to develop their own views and experience, they can only do so by sharing vicariously the experience of their representatives.

Representation is therefore to be seen not as an act but as a process. It is the means whereby the considered views of parents contribute to the decisions made about schooling and are themselves in turn further developed and informed. These conditions for effective representation are difficult for any individual to meet even in a very small community where the representative can know and be known by all, unless there is also

ample opportunity for discussion of views, issues and policies and for reporting back by the representative to those whom he represents. Hence the development in political democracy of the party system which may have its disadvantages and abuses but which does make democracy broadly workable. In schooling, parent organisations have to take the responsibility for providing the forum for discussion of issues and development of appropriate policies.

The process of participation in decision-making is one which involves co-operative discussion, assessment of information, consideration of implications and effects and finally a decision which has been considered from different points of view and which is agreed to be the best in the circumstances and conditions. This process is impossible if some or all of the participants start and finish with the same opinions. This is inevitable if the participants are or regard themselves as delegates of an organisation bound in detail and not simply in broad policy by the decisions of the organisation. In these circumstances, the participant cannot make his own judgement on the merits of the case, cannot compromise and cannot change his viewpoint. He will be bringing to the process of participation decisions which have been made outside the process by an organisation which has not had access to all the information or to other viewpoints. A participant who is or acts as a delegate of an organisation has no place in a participative process and, conversely, the process itself cannot function effectively if any of the participants see themselves as delegates.

Representation, as already discussed, has a quite different function: a two-way process of communication hingeing on broad policies. Provided the policies are policies in a real sense and not matters of detail for specific action, they provide an essential and explicit framework of values within which specific decisions can be made. Such a framework, whether explicit or implicit, will be used by anyone participating in decision-making whether as an individual or a representative. In the latter case, the principles and values are explicit and are likely to have been well considered in their application to issues. Policies of this kind contribute to the process of discussion and interchange; they do not impede or frustrate it.

REFERENCES - CHAPTER 4

1. Phillip Hughes. Conflict, Compromise, Consensus. Course Lecture 1977. Canberra: ACT Chapter, Australian Institute of Education Administration, 1977, p.5-6.

2. For a fuller discussion of the centralised education system, see

   . Blakers,C. To Have a Say. Parent participation in decision-making about schooling. Canberra: ACSSO, 1981.

3. Ibid.

Chapter 5

THE PARTICIPATIVE SYSTEM

The Relationship Between the Authority and the Schools

There is a further fundamental issue arising from participative decision-making. To accept this method of making decisions in and about schooling is to accept a greater variety of social and educational purposes reflected in schooling: differing aspirations, aims and purposes; greater disagreement and dissent. It also introduces, as mentioned previously, wider opportunities for the pursuit of various kinds of self-interest whether these are based on strongly held views, or the desire for personal status and influence or the wish to further the interests of a particular school or any other of a thousand sectional motivations of varying degrees of acceptability or unacceptability. These developments, if they occur, are likely to be most evident at the school level. They raise the question of relationships between the schools and the system as a whole as this is represented by the Authority.

Once the centralisation of decision-making is broken down, there follows immediately the question of how much independence the schools should have. Is there a need for some overall direction of schooling which will

- ensure that the variety of individual needs is being met;
- ensure that overall social purposes are reflected in the content and approaches of schooling;
- exclude purposes which are judged incompatible with social purposes;
- prevent or restrict the powers of dominant groups to decisively influence the purposes of particular schools in ways inconsistent with social and educational aims.

Structurally, it is a question of whether the ACT Schools Authority is a system of education or a series of independent schools served by a central administration. There is no doubt about the orginal design and intention. The emphasis of the Currie Working Party on a system of education was confirmed by the Hughes Report:

> The major decisions to be made about the governance of education lie in the definition of the nature and functions of two types of bodies, the central authority and the school council. In view of Australian history it would be easy to recommend either of two extremes, the traditional centralised system or a polar reaction to this, a completely decentralised system. Neither the evidence presented to us nor our own deliberations encourage the adoption of either extreme.[1]

Once the concept of a system is accepted, then the constraints on schools are those necessary to protect the essential values of the society and the system. This would imply for the system of schooling a set of boundaries beyond which freedom could not go and these boundaries

would reflect the basic principles of the system and of the society. Given the avowed Australian social principle that everyone should have a realistic opportunity to seek personal fulfilment, the constraints of the system should be such as will allow the school community the independence necessary to produce the diversity appropriate to meet the differing needs of individuals - provided the needs of all children and not just some children were being adequately catered for.

Schools within such a system of education would see themselves as inter-dependent units in an overall pattern of education which had clearly defined and commonly accepted aims. In this concept, each school has a dual responsibility: to the children in its care and to the welfare of the system as a whole; that is, to all children. The independence of each school community would then be circumscribed in three ways:

- by the need to accept a common basis of social and educational aims, as determined by a central authority representative of all those concerned in schooling: teachers, parents, students, administrators
- by the need to consider the welfare of all children in the system
- by the need for coherence and, if necessary, co-ordination between stages of education.

This in turn implies a role of oversight and restraint to be played by the system centrally. To fulfil its reponsibility, the system must be prepared to use its powers of restraint and control where necessary; that is, to enforce its decisions in matters affecting the basic aims and overall welfare of the system. This includes such matters as the allocation of resources according to need, the setting of maximums and conditions for school charges and ensuring that the demands of the articulate and the influential are not accorded undue weight.

This concept of freedom-within-control is a difficult one to put into practice. It is not compatible with autocratic control and centralised restraint. It requires the development of a complex system of relationships which are based on a common understanding of aims and responsibilities and which work through an effective system of communication and consultation. There is a constant danger in any system that attitudes of confrontation - of 'we' versus 'they' - may arise to cloud judgement, complicate simple situations or over-simplify complex ones. More often than not these attitudes result from misunderstanding and consequent resentment rather than from genuinely divergent views. Communication and consultation are basic tools to prevent misunderstanding.

The responsibility of a school system can be stated in two ways, which give the same meaning but different emphasis:

- to assist <u>each</u> child to develop fully as an individual within the society
- to ensure that <u>all</u> children have the opportunity and help they need to develop in this way.

For the attainment of these aims, both the Central Authority and the school boards have responsibility, but the emphasis of responsibility for each will be different. The school will be in the best position to achieve the first; the Central Authority in the best position to ensure the second.

This balance of emphasis and responsibility becomes the framework within which the system as a whole must operate if gross disparities and inequalities are not to be encouraged.

This implies the development of a balance of responsibility between the schools and the central authority based on the acceptance, as a working principle, that

- within the basic guiding principles set out by the central authority each school should deal with those matters which concern its own pupils, bearing in mind that they are only temporarily in its care
- any matters which affect related schools either of the same or different levels should be the subject of consultation with those schools
- any matters which go beyond the particular school or affect the well-being of the system as a whole should be the subject of consultation with the central authority and if necessary of final determination by that authority.

The structures of the ACT system inevitably produce these two sets of new relationships: parents/community with teachers/administrators; schools with central authority and the two, of course, interact with each other. Because they are new relationships in Australian education and government practice and because they are by their nature fluid relationships, they generate a continuing tension in issues: parents vis-a-vis professionals; parents and professionals at the school level vis-a-vis centralised decision-making. The tensions are healthy and can be productive and stimulating provided a balance is kept to ensure that the participative system remains true to its intent and does not swing too far to either of the extremes mentioned by the Hughes Report.

In a system which is dynamic and flexible rather than static, it is important that roles and responsibilities are clearly visualised and continually reviewed.

The Central Authority: Roles and Relationships

On the central authority of the system - both the decision-making council and the Schools Office - lies the chief responsibility for maintaining the essential character of the system, for its well-being and for developing it to meet changing social conditions and educational needs. The role of the central authority in the system is analogous with the role of a wise government in a democratic and fair society: to provide the planning and conditions which will allow opportunities to all individuals for personal development and usefulness, while exercising the constraints necessary to ensure that the goal of some is not attained at the expense of others. The Authority thus has to exercise the supervision and restraint, and provide the advice, assistance and facilities necessary to offer every child as far as possible the opportunity he needs for development. Conversely, it must also recognise that the welfare of the child as an individual is dependent on the freedom of each school

to decide its own appropriate education approaches and programs, as far as this is consistent with basic aims and equality of opportunity in the system as a whole.

Further, it needs not only to allow, but positively to encourage and provide opportunity for questioning and reassessment of its practical aims and methods, so that the system as a whole may change and adapt responsively to changing needs. In short, it must ensure, as far as possible, equality of educational opportunity for development, variety of education approach and flexibility within the system.

So that control within the system may be exercised on the basis of understanding and mutual co-operation, it should be the responsibility of the Central Authority

- to state explicitly the basic principles and aims of the system and to issue guidelines for curriculum and other appropriate matters based on these principles
- to define, as far as possible at each stage and on the basis of discussion and experience gained, those areas of decision-making which, because they affect the system as a whole, come properly within the responsibility of the Authority
- to establish an effective system of communication between schools and the Authority
- to provide for an effective system of consultation between schools and the Authority, and between schools themselves
- to provide resources, facilities, advisers, consultants and courses as support to schools in determining their policies and implementing their programs
- to be aware of and to plan adequately for social and educational change and the demands that such change is likely to make on the system and schools
- to offer opportunity for periodic review of the operation of the system, its administration and its schools.

The basic tools of management within an Authority of this kind are information, communication and consultation in order to produce understanding of issues and, as far as possible, consensus throughout the system; that is, among the students, teachers and parents at the school level and in the wider community. If the system is to be decentralised and participative and yet remain a system, the process must be a two-way one: from the schools to the central authority and from the authority to the schools.

There are many practical ways of developing this process - and the ways and means need constant review to determine whether they remain effective or merely become institutionalised. Among methods already used in the Schools Authority have been School Liaison Officers and consultative committees.

The original structure of the school board in the ACT quite deliberately provided for the representation of the central authority on the board as a link between school and authority. School liaison officers in the earlier years of the system fulfilled this function. These officers, carefully selected for tact and discretion as well as for their

capabilities, were well accepted at the school level. They were able

- to convey and explain decisions of the Authority which might have been more controversial or unpopular if the reasons for them had not been understood
- to alert the Authority in advance to looming problems and issues
- to convey concerns of the school on major issues to the Authority
- to help resolve minor and practical problems by knowing where to go within the Authority or outside it
- to make the schools aware of Authority resources and encourage their use; for example, consultants, in-service courses, relevant committees and inquiries
- in general, to create a sense of being part of a system which was personal, approachable and sympathetic to needs and concerns.

Consultative committees, task forces and working parties are another means of involving a wide range of people in the discussion and work which must precede decision-making on major issues. In these cases, the functions and expected outcomes of the Committees need to be clearly understood by all involved as well as their relationships with the administrative and decision-making process. Committees can get out of hand in number, scope and expectations, but if properly used and serviced they can be an effective method of opening up and sometimes even resolving contentious issues. And they widen opportunities for participation and understanding.

The wider the participation in the activities and operations of the system, the greater the need for training and development of parents and community in their unaccustomed roles. It is at last beginning to be recognised in Australian education that teachers need in-service education for their professional development but also for their assumption of new roles and responsibilities. There is no reason why parents should be expected to assume new roles and responsibilities by instinct. For almost a century, parents have been largely conditioned to unquestioning acceptance of a passive and impotent role in schooling. With this background, it cannot be unexpected that many parents, even in the ACT, have limited concepts of what 'participation' may involve and may hesitate to take on unfamiliar roles which they may feel themselves inadequate to sustain. Some will have sensitive memories of past experiences with schools and teachers and be reluctant to expose themselves yet again to patronage, discourtesy or discouragement. The Authority, if it wishes, can do a great deal to stimulate wider parent participation, to encourage the more diffident to become involved in ways they feel comfortable with and to provide the equivalent of in-service training for the variety of roles parents are undertaking.

In all of these functions, the participative system differs essentially from the traditional centralised system and its operation. The staffing of various kinds available to the system needs to reflect these differences. It is useless to attempt to develop a system such as the ACT system with the staffing structures and levels of a centralised system or an orthodox department. The difficulties of persuading external authorities such as the Public Service Board of the needs of such a system

have already been mentioned and must be well known from dreary experience. Yet unless, at least gradually, adequate and appropriate staffing is provided for such operations as liaison officers, the servicing of committees, the training of parents, then the system operates under immense handicaps, and the stresses these generate among staff of all kinds and between staff and parents will be reflected in a growing exasperation with and scepticism about the value of participation. These in turn will have their effect on the way issues are resolved and the general operation of the system.

It is counter-productive to provide new structures and to expect parents and community to participate while retaining methods of operation more appropriate to a centralised system and structure. Neither will work satisfactorily and each will generate inefficiencies and frustrations for all who are involved.

The Powers and Responsibilities of Schools

Schools within such a system are to be seen as inter-dependent units in an overall pattern of education which has clearly defined and commonly accepted aims. Each school has therefore a dual responsibility: to the children in its care and to the welfare of the system as a whole; i.e. to all children. This is accentuated by the fact that each school is a stage in the development of the child, and his education at one level cannot be independent of his education at the next level. Independence must therefore give way also to coherence and, if necessary, co-ordination between stages of education.

This being understood as fundamental, it is then the responsibility of each school

- to consider the children in its care as individuals with differing needs and abilities
- to plan its educational approaches and programs flexibly so that they meet these varying needs
- to encourage active participation by a wide range of parents and, wherever appropriate, students in planning these programs
- to seek whatever help and guidance it needs in achieving its objectives and to use the available resources of the system
- to foster relationships with the neighbourhood and the community generally
- to do whatever lies in its power to ensure effective communication and consultation within the system and with the wider community
- to keep the Central Authority informed about the school, its progress and proposed changes in direction.

If the school is to have these responsibilities and to cater for the differing needs of its own students, then its governing body, the school board, must have, within the constraints of the system discussed earlier, powers to determine its own policies and to carry them out. The legal

responsibility of school boards to determine policies for the school is a hollow responsibility unless they also have the powers necessary to see that the policies are put into practice.

The Hughes Report[2] made quite detailed recommendations on the powers which should be available to school boards. These covered

- general policy
- budgeting and control of funds
- staffing - professional as well as non-professional
- curriculum
- some aspects of school buildings use and maintenance.

Few of these powers have ever in fact been enjoyed by school boards. Without them, teachers and parents are being asked to put considerable effort into roles which can be seen to be little more than token. The determination by the school board of policy and broad curriculum directions is likely to be an academic exercise - and a frustrating one - if it cannot control the allocation of its own finances according to its priorities, decide the appropriate kinds and levels of staff it needs and choose its staff to fit in with the philosophy and policy of the school. The obstacles to a proper measure of financial control for school boards are largely external to the Authority as discussed in Chapter 1, but they are surely as capable of being overcome in the ACT as they have been in South Australia and Victoria. After all, the Commonwealth has had nearly ten years to become used to the demands and needs of a school system.

There are two aspects to the professional staffing of schools:

- the allocation of staff; that is, determining the numbers and levels of staff for a particular school
- the selection of staff; that is, choosing the particular teachers for the school.

In both of these aspects of staffing schools, the school board should have an effective voice. There are many ways in which this might be done without endangering security of tenure for teachers or opening the gates to abuses attendant on powers of 'hire and fire'. For example, the allocation of staff to schools could be seen as part of an overall school budget allocation which would allow the school

- to decide how much of the budget should be allocated to staffing and how much to other needs
- to determine, within its allocation for staffing, how many teachers and of what levels and kinds are required
- to advertise its positions within the system and, if necessary, outside
- to select its teaching staff from among the applicants for the positions.

Arrangements which give the school an effective role in choosing its professional staff entail a considerable departure from established procedures. They also raise the highly sensitive issue of the parent role in such selection.

In the matter of selection of principal or staff, parent participation appears as a threat to teacher security in three senses:

1) personal
2) professional
3) industrial.

The first two are closely related and surface in a variety of fears and of sensitivities. Teachers, for example, seem to fear the exposing of details of their qualifications and experience to public scrutiny, even if 'public' scrutiny is no more than one representative of parents or community and no more than many other kinds of job applicants take for granted. They are sensitive also about the need to apply for positions within a system even where tenure is secure and it is simply a matter of choosing or being chosen by a particular school. They object to being subject to a process of selection which involves anyone outside teachers themselves. And they fear that closer relationships between school and community may expose personal weaknesses or inadequacy in the job itself or in personal and social relationships.

These are intangible aspects of the problem and are likely to be implicit rather than explicit. The industrial fears are, on the other hand, quite explicit though many of them are founded on misconceptions of what participation means, in the ACT context. Among the issues which arise are the bogeys of hire and fire - the feeling that to allow even a little parent participation in selection is to admit the thin end of the wedge of giving the local community powers to hire and fire staff, to institute contract teaching and to erode the security of tenure which Australian teachers, as public servants, have always enjoyed. From such fears it is an easy step to see the proposal for parent participation as an attack on working conditions generally - with all that this implies.

Yet, if parent participation is to be effective and consistent rather than token and ad hoc, then the total school, represented by the school board, must claim a role in selecting the professional staff whose responsibility it will be to implement the policies and curriculum of the school.

The claim to participation has particular relevance in relation to the selection of the principal of the school. The co-operation and commitment of the principal are vital to effective implementation within a school of particular teaching approaches which express school aims. An unsympathetic prihcipal can be an obstacle to, even a destructive force against, parent participation on the one hand and teacher involvement, interest and innovation on the other. This is a fact which is recognised by teachers themselves and which explains part of the open or concealed resentment felt by many teachers and expressed by many teacher organisations in Australia against principals and their organisations.

Since the role of principal is and is likely to remain one of vital importance in the aims, policies and curriculum of a school, it is surely logical and reasonable that the school board should expect to be appropriately involved in selection of the principal.

The obstacles to determination and choice of its professional staffing by school boards lie largely in the policies and attitudes of the ACT Teachers Federation which has consistently stood on policies of

- applying to all schools of the same level a strict, industrially agreed formula to determine numbers, levels and structure of staffing

- excluding any parent or member of the community from any direct role or influence in the process of choosing and appointing staff to a particular school.

To import into the ACT school processes rigid staffing formulas developed in more centralised systems and to insist on an adaptation of centralised staff appointments is to reduce the capacity of the school as a corporate body to cater for its own clientele. The inappropriateness of such 'mass produced' methods is already being seen in current circumstances of declining school enrolments. The corollary to such approaches is to meet the problems with 'mass-produced' solutions also based on numbers and formulas and resulting in the closure or amalgamation of schools. These and other problems are part of the changing social and educational circumstances of today and the remainder of the century. They will not go away; and they require flexibility and adaptability not the rigid application of formulas against which the ACT system was itself a healthy reaction.

One further issue has been a source of argument and contention in the ACT Schools Authority since its inception. It involves the rights or wishes of schools to set and collect fees independently of any constraints by the central authority. There is no legal basis on which schools in the government system can charge fees in the same way as non-government schools. Thus school 'fees' are not obligatory, yet governments rely on a substantial portion of the costs of government education being borne by parents of the pupils, and schools have come to rely for a great and increasing proportion of their amenities and facilities on parent contributions. It is an unjust and ambiguous situation which needs concerted attack by parent and teacher organisations at State/Territory and national levels.

It is the right of every child, and not a privilege, to be offered adequate and suitable education. It is the responsibility of the system and its central authority to see that this is done. If a government system of education cannot adequately provide free education of high quality for all its students, then the pressures for the necessary funding must be exerted on appropriate governments and not on children at school. It is the responsibility of the central authority to assure to all schools in the system the high material standards which facilitate high educational standards, and to see that special needs are adequately met. It will be in a much stronger position to achieve this if the interest and influence of all school councils, teachers and parents in the system are directed not just to their particular schools but towards raising the standards of the system as a whole.

The question of school charges is one that affects the system as a whole; in fact, one which could determine fundamentally the kind of system which develops. It is obvious that many parents of children in government schools can afford and are willing to spend significant sums of money to improve the quality of their children's education, and this is especially so where the money is seen to benefit directly their particular school. It is easy to overlook the fact that there are also many parents who are genuinely unable, and some who are unwilling, to contribute in this way. It is the responsibility of the central authority to safeguard the rights and opportunities of all children, whatever the degree of parental affluence or poverty, interest or apathy. This responsibility is not compatible with a system in which schools can set and charge 'compulsory' fees.

The imposition of fees by schools (or school boards) would have undesirable effects both on the system as a whole and for individual children. It would lead inevitably, and quite quickly, to a situation in which schools in some areas would be able to enjoy considerably better facilities and standards than schools in other, and perhaps poorer or disadvantaged, areas, simply because they were able to impose and collect substantial fees on top of the funding available to them as part of the system.

Even if such fees are called by other names, such as levy or contribution, and even if they are legally and nominally not compulsory, they are nonetheless backed by the authority of the school or the school board and tend to be seen as obligatory. Indeed, if they are not seen as such, they lose their effectiveness and become no easier to collect than any other donation.

Nor is it acceptable for a school to impose fees or substantial charges even on the understanding that it will waive them for those students whose parents cannot or will not pay. However tactfully this may be done - whether by 'scholarship' or 'free places' or on appeal - there remains for student and parent a certain measure of humiliation and a sense of charity extended.

There remains the question of meeting the wish of parents to contribute directly to their particular school. This has previously been an important (sometimes the sole) function of P & C Associations. Though it is to be hoped that the interests and role of P & C Associations will develop and expand, they still remain the most suitable avenue for parent/community contributions to their schools. Donations to P & C funds are by their nature voluntary and impose no sense of discrimination on anyone. The funds collected are then available for school use in accordance with the education policies of the school council. At the same time, parents and the community are likely to remain more conscious of the need to support the central authority in its pressures for adequate funding.

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2. Ibid., pp.65-72.

Chapter 6

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHOOL

The Concept of the Neighbourhood School

The early campaign for a separate ACT school system originated in the concern of a local community for its own school, and the concept of the neighbourhood school was central to the concept of the ACT school system. Hence the provision that 'each school will ... have the responsibility of catering first for the children in its own area', before accepting pupils from other areas. The 'neighbourhood', of course, ranges in size from the area served by the local pre-school to the area served by the secondary college.

Basic to concepts of the neighbourhood school is the identification of the 'school' as comprising pupils, teachers and parents - a community which is centred on but not confined to the buildings designated as schools. Responsibility for providing the child with the opportunities and skills necessary for his development is then a shared responsibility to be carried by school and family primarily but with a contribution by other community institutions such as churches, health centres, sporting clubs, employer and union organisations, arts and crafts societies and so on. Co-operation between school and family is necessary to ensure that the child has access to the full range of community services and resources which may help him in his development.

The character of the school is delineated in the Guiding Principles (Appendix 1) and is summed up as 'one in which the child is of paramount concern both as an individual and as a member of the community'. This is a large responsibility which, taken seriously, affects attitudes within the school, relationships within and outside the school, awareness of social trends and issues, teaching practices and school organisation.

It begins with the recognition of children as individual persons with rights. One of the most important of the rights is the right to be allowed and encouraged to accept responsibility for his/her own development in such measure as is appropriate to his/her personal growth and maturity. The forms and expression of responsibility come within school activities, in the learning process itself, in the decision-making in and about schooling.

A second essential basis is the development within the school of attitudes of courtesy and consideration between and among teachers and students and any who are involved. It is this lack of courtesy and consideration in Australian schooling generally which has been shown time and again to be a prime factor in student alienation and in behaviour problems. From their research at the beginning of the 1970s W.F. Connell et al. commented:

> Regardless of age, and regardless of opinion on the issue of control, there is one constant demand: civility. Those who want strict teachers often specify that they must punish fairly, not have pets. Those who want more liberal teachers often complain of rudeness and arbitrary use of power under the present system. They often seem to hate shouting and being yelled at more

> than the fact of discipline itself. There is a constant demand for teachers who are 'friendly', 'nice', 'easy to talk to', 'not so mean', 'able to take a joke' ...
>
> A large number make the point that they want more human contact with teachers. They want teachers who can 'understand' them, as many of them say - "The teachers to have respect for you and treat you like adults".[1]

From their research at the beginning of the 1980s, R.W. Connell et al. comment:

> Reading between the lines of this and other incidents, some more serious, one can see a well-developed technique for irritating adults; exasperated teachers overreacting for fear of losing control of the class; much injured innocence, and Heather and her mates all enjoying the stir as a break in boredom. But one can also see a much more serious claim to civility, to fair and equal treatment from adults. Heather is in fact contesting the connection of age and authority in the school which defines her as less respect-worthy than the teacher.[2]

To change these attitudes requires a shift in the focus of teachers so that they see children as persons rather than as anonymous stereotypes. If such attitudes were established effectively, they would in turn generate questioning of many of the teaching approaches and school practices which result in the ability and sex stereotyping mentioned in Chapter 2. They might also encourage teachers to examine critically their manner and tone of speaking to students individually, in classes and particularly in assemblies where modern P.A. systems accentuate any suggestion of the concentration camp approach. They would be reflected also in the organisation of the school to avoid discriminating labelling of students while yet distinguishing and catering for individual needs. None of this implies, as is sometimes argued, a less than rigorous approach to scholarship and standards of achievement. On the contrary, it expects and requires from each student the utmost that he/she is capable of in the essential skills, and beyond those in the directions of his/her natural bent and capacities.

The effective pursuit of these ends is dependent on close collaboration between the school and the family. One outlet for this has been provided by the school board; but decision-making structures, however participative and effective, can involve relatively few people. They should not therefore be seen as replacing other forms of contact and collaboration which take place from day to day. These rely for their success on genuinely welcoming attitudes on the part of the principal and teachers, so that parents are not only invited in general terms to visit the school as they wish, but are unmistakably and warmly pressed to do so - not simply as visitors; not simply for the particular interest of their own children, but as valued contributors to the corporate life of the school and its activities. Without this as a basis, parent contact with schools is likely to be token or limited to those parents with the self-confidence to take advantage of the general or the luke-warm invitation. The school which complains of parent apathy is the school which should examine its methods of contacting and inviting parents to be involved.

Informal contacts with parents can be discussed in three distinct though related categories:

- those contacts concerned with the provision of information and with effective communication
- those contacts concerned with the provision of resources
- those contacts concerned with the evaluation and shaping of schooling.

Information and Communication

Information and communication are as important between the school and its community as they are between the Authority and the schools, and many schools in the ACT have gone to considerable effort to improve methods of communication beyond the traditional school bulletin, the enigmatic school report or the parent/teacher evening where parents queue up for a two-minute rapid fire chat about their children with a hard-pressed teacher. Examples of better methods of communication are to be seen in:

- more frequent and informative school bulletins, circulars and newsletters
- school bulletins etc. in different languages appropriate to the ethnic backgrounds of the students
- comprehensive school handbooks with information on school philosophy, teaching approaches, staffing, courses, etc.
- school reports which incorporate a profile of student achievement in terms more meaningful to parents and, later, to employers
- drop-in centres where parents can come, meet other parents, talk to teachers, hold informal meetings, etc.

Resources

It is hardly new to speak of parents and the community as providing resources for schooling. This is what they have been doing since the beginning through taxes and, at the local level, through fund-raising. But there has been little attempt until recently to see potential in more specific and personal use of parent/community resources. Parents contribute to school programs by helping with transport, excursions and working bees of various kinds. These are already well known and used. But parents/community can also help in ways which are just beginning to be realised and are not yet widely used such as:

- by taking part in the teaching of reading or numeracy or other basic skills programs

- by acting as classroom aides
- by giving lectures or courses on topics where they have expertise
- by demonstrating and teaching particular skills or crafts; or running hobby groups
- by providing work experience or contacts with employers and unions and with other social groups
- by providing opportunities for social and community work and experience.

The kind of contribution to be made will vary with the particular character of the school/community, but there is no school which cannot draw upon its parent and other community resources provided it is willing to devote some effort and imagination to the preliminary contacts, and to engage in close consultation with parents and community.

Michael Pusey in Dynamics of Bureaucracy extends the picture of this kind of participation and co-operation:

> If there were genuine community involvement, groups of parents would be working hand in hand with teachers, talking with them in coffee rooms, working with teacher committees, organising evening discussions for a wider community, and arranging learning experiences for groups of students in the neighbouring factories, farms, radio stations, museums and libraries. This would break up many of the routines and create a web of new social relationships across subject departments, between the district superintendent and the staff, and between the school and community organisations.
>
> The teachers's work would no longer isolate him from an adult audience - in my view one of the most psychologically debilitating consequences of the teacher's role. Instead, the teacher could draw some emotional support, esteem, and appreciation from an adult group for whom his work would now have more visibility.[3]

Evaluation of Schools

A further parent/community role in schooling lies in the continuing evaluation and shaping of schooling. Evaluation is an integral part of school processes. Teachers evaluate; so do students and parents and the community. But it is desirable that there be greater consensus about what is to be evaluated, in what way and by whom.

Community evaluation of schooling already takes place as the public criticisms and demands for accountability show. But is is an evaluation often based on ignorance and misunderstanding. Michael Pusey makes this comment:

> One of the most distressing aspects of the present situation is that the most enlightened and basic school reforms are those which are most likely to draw negative responses from the public. Since the community is isolated from the schools, there is no public understanding of the modern approaches to education which are being tried in some of the schools; by default, the public is either completely confused or it assumes that nothing basic has changed and therefore expects the children to be taught in the same way as the parents were a generation before.[4]

If the community does not share in the process of evaluation at the school level, it will still make its own evaluation on grounds and information which may be inadequate or inappropriate. The process of evaluation is one which could be put to constructive use to help schools define their aims and purposes more clearly and to respond to changing needs and circumstances; at the same time, it could help to generate wider and deeper community understanding about schooling.

If this is to be achieved, a clear distinction needs to be made between evaluation and accountability. The concept of accountability separates the community from responsibility. It implies that the community pays for the schools and the schools have the obligation to account for the results to the community; the outcomes being measured against pre-determined aims and purposes. Accountability, however, loses its essence if there is not general agreement on what results are being aimed at and what standards are acceptable. In current social conditions it is difficult to reach general community agreement on goals and standards. It is considerably easier to do so through consultation at a local school level than it is in the wider context.

The short-sightedness of evaluation programs which exclude parents/community or allow only a token role should be self-evident. The evaluation will still take place and be expressed from the outside in criticism, hostility and media pressure on schools.

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Chapter 7

THE ROLE OF PARENT ORGANISATIONS

The Social Implications of Participation

Parent participation in decision-making cannot be viewed as an isolated social phenomenon. It is set in the context of a fundamental restructuring of time and occupation which is, whether acknowledged or not, occurring in our society and which is evident in changing patterns of work and leisure. Participation of various kinds in community affairs is a constructive use of personal time which should be encouraged in a technological society. It should be not only encouraged but expected of people.

At present, participation is expected to fit into the class of leisure activities - what people do in their spare time. Because of this, the range of people who are able to participate is restricted to those who can make 'spare time' or whose work arrangements are sufficiently flexible. It is most easily available also to those who are affluent enough to meet the expenses involved and to those with the knowledge and self-confidence to engage in its complex processes. It should be a matter of concern to the society as a whole to encourage and make possible the widest participation in the activities and decision-making of a democracy.

There are some steps which could be taken in the short-term to facilitate and democratise participation of parents in decision-making in and about schooling. These include

- recognition by employers, including governments, of a need for release time for employees for participation in decision-making, as they are currently released by some employers for further education
- greater flexibility in working hours
- allocation of resources by education departments and statutory authorities to pay participants at a reasonable rate and particularly to compensate, where necessary, for wages or salary foregone
- the development by tertiary institutions and other in-service education providers of courses for parents, teachers and others who participate to promote study of educational issues and understanding of the processes of participation
- the acceptance by education systems of a continuing responsibility to encourage, support and develop among parents the interest and skills necessary to effective participation
- the guarantee by governments of adequate resources for parent organisations at all levels to enable them to carry out their responsibilities in participation.

The Responsibilities of Parent Organisations

To accept a role in decision-making is to accept also the responsibilities and effort that go with it. It is one thing to influence or advise those who make the decisions; it is quite another to take on the responsibility of making the decisions and living with the consequences of those decisions. It is therefore important for parent organisations who wish to participate in decision-making to become aware of what can be entailed.

One of the first responsibilities of parent organisations is to do whatever may be possible to make the society as a whole and its governments aware of the support needs of participation discussed above. Unless pressed systematically, such initiatives may be a long time coming. Within the organisations themselves, other responsibilities have to be met if participation and representation are to be effective processes. These may be discussed under the following headings:

- representing parents
- policies
- training parent representatives
- choosing parent representatives
- supporting parent representatives.

Representing Parents

One of the main reasons for the early development of parent organisations, particularly at the State and national levels, was the need to represent the interests of parents at decision-making levels first in centralised State systems and later to the Commonwealth Government when it entered the field of schooling. Parent organisations thus match in their structures the different levels of decision-making in and about schooling: school, regional (where appropriate), State and national. If they are effective as organisations, they offer opportunity to all parents at any level to participate in the choice of representatives: in the identification of principles and aims and the formulation of policies; in the experience and educational development which come back to the organisation through its representatives.

The key role for parent organisations is in the formulation of policies. These form the essential link between the representatives and those whom they represent. Policy formulation is not an easy or an academic exercise. The policies result from the individual efforts of many parents with diverse views and backgrounds working in a participative process. Those parents who act as representatives will have helped to formulate the policies; their experience as representatives will contribute to the further development of policies.

A third role for parent organisations is in providing the network of communication which allows representation to be a productive process for those represented and for the organisation itself. Thus, any parent organisation at any level should accept responsibility for ensuring that parents at the school level are kept closely and adequately informed about

the issues and decisions which arise, and that the awareness and understanding of the community generally on education issues are increased. This process of parent and community education about schooling offers the best hope for more realistic community expectations of schooling and for more informed and constructive comment than now appears in the media.

Fourthly, parent organisations which accept the responsibilities of selecting and nominating representatives must also be prepared to accept responsibility for training and supporting the representatives in the difficult task of participation in decision-making.

The organisation which seeks to represent parent opinion should do its best to ensure that it does in fact know and represent what parents think and want, and not just what a few selected parents think and want. This applies whether the organisation is at the school, State or national level.

This is not an easy task. There has been little opportunity or incentive in the past for parents to be involved in or even to have more than minimal contact with schooling; there has indeed been considerable discouragement. It is not surprising then if the parents who do participate tend to be the well educated, the articulate and the affluent. On those who do participate devolves a continuing responsibility to encourage the participation of the widest possible range of parents. This can only be done at the school level, but it can be encouraged and facilitated at the State level if it is held as an important and ongoing objective. It is not an objective which will be achieved by wishing or by complaints about 'apathy'; it requires considerable measures of active personal effort to make contacts in the school community and to encourage participation.

Parent organisations at all levels need also to ensure that their own procedures do not discourage participation, either because they are not appropriately democratic in practice (whatever constitutions and forms may suggest) or because they are supremely dull. In the first case, established procedures and routines can lead to monopolisation by a few people and the exclusion of others, deliberately or by indifference or discouragement. Sheer dullness probably drives away more potential participants than any other methods of discouragement. It is most apparent at the school level where the procedures of P & C Associations often seem designed to enshrine the trivial in exorably soporific minutes.

Parent organisations are as subject to institutionalism as any other organised social group, government or non-government. Any organisation will benefit from ruthless self-examination or from independent review of its aims and procedures, and parent organisations are no exception. If they wish to be recognised as representing parent viewpoint, they must take pains to ensure that this is what they are doing.

Policies

The policy of an organisation reflects its values, its concerns and its maturity of understanding and purpose. The development of policy is

one of the most important and productive of the activities of a parent organisation, since it is the means whereby parents come together to discuss common concerns in schooling and to develop their own thinking from the individual and practical to the communal and conceptual. Policy thus provides the considered parent viewpoint on which parent representatives rely for their essential framework of decision-making.

Parent organisations therefore need to give considerable thought to their policy statements to ensure that they are coherent, consistent and relevant to current or foreseeable issues. Too often, policy documents are a rag-bag collection of statements, accumulated ad hoc over years and ranging in content from the sublime to the trivial. Parent representatives should not be expected to struggle with the difficulties of inadequate or outdated or over-detailed policies, on top of the inherent difficulties of the participative processes.

The statements of thinking which a parent organisation accepts as 'official policy' fall into three distinct categories:

- those which express the social and educational premises on which policies are based
- those which are statements of policy arising from these premises
- those which advocate specific action to be undertaken towards achievement of policy goals and ultimately of the educational and social aims expressed in the premises.

Each of these has a different period of relevance or currency. The premises are a statement of educational and social values and aims; as such they could be expected to be enduring. The policies will inevitably be affected by changing circumstances and in need of review, adaptation and updating at regular intervals. The action should be revised very frequently to alter, discard, repeat or follow up particular implementation and assess relevance and effectiveness.

The formulation of policy is thus an ongoing process which provides public statements of values and intent at the same time as it develops the thinking and maturity of those involved in it. For the parent representative, it provides a framework of values and an insight into participative processes.

Training Parent Representatives

The structures and processes within which parent representatives on statutory bodies at any level must work and the issues which confront them are complex. Parent involvement in parent organisations is the training for parent participation in decision-making. Yet it is not always used effectively with this purpose in mind. Indeed much of the activity and representation in parent organisations is distributed in an ad hoc fashion. To some extent this is an unavoidable characteristic of any voluntary organisation, but some steps could be taken to make the process more effective as training and experience. Such steps as the following might be considered:

- the identification of particular responsibilities of office-bearers and other senior positions in the organisation
- a review of the different ways in which people in these positions can carry out their responsibilities
- an assessment of the coherence and co-ordination of the structure of the organisation and how it relates to parents at the school level and to parent organisations at other levels
- a deliberate and sustained program of seeking talent and special aptitude and interest among members and potential members, and of spreading responsibility accordingly
- the publication of handbooks explaining such things as the effective conduct of meetings (as distinct from the unproductive formalities); the structures of participative decision-making; issues such as confidentiality; techniques of reporting
- seminars and discussions, at the school as well as at other levels, of the important education issues which underlie many parental concerns about schooling
- negotiation with tertiary institutions and with other institutions/departments which provide in-service education for teachers to develop courses relevant to parent participation and other courses which involve both parents and teachers
- the use of experienced parent representatives in the training of others.

Using Parent Representatives

The responsibilities of a parent organisation do not stop with the choice of the representative. An ongoing relationship needs to be maintained: the parent representative needs the support of the organisation; the organisation needs the benefit of the information and experiences gained by the parent representative.

What the parent representative needs from the organisation includes:

- information and research support
- library and office facilities and services
- adequate up-to-date policies and a role in their formulation
- opportunity to discuss problems and issues, formally and informally
- comment on and reaction to reports made to the organisation
- information on the activities of and developments in the organisation (in the case of those isolated by distance or commitments)
- assurance and reassurance of continuing confidence in the representative.

In attempting to provide this support however inadequately, the organisation itself benefits and develops.

Responsibilities of Parent Representatives

It has been stressed throughout this paper that those who participate in decision-making in and about schooling must have as their primary interest the educational benefit of children in schools. The first responsibility of a parent representative is therefore to be sure that this commitment is the prime motivation. There will be others, less worthy and less idealistic but understandably human: the desire for whatever status or power the position may be thought to bring; the wish to fill in time productively; the association with congenial people; the urge to use untapped capacities. All of these can contribute to effective participation provided they remain subordinate to the primary commitment; provided they are not allowed to dominate and cloud the issues in decision-making.

Being a parent representative involves two sets of responsibilities: to the parent organisation and to the Council or Board. The parent organisation should be able to expect from its representative

- reports in a form and with a frequency agreed beforehand with the organisation
- the presentation of relevant information in a form intelligible to those less involved in or conversant with the issues and developments
- the highlighting of issues which may become important and require the attention of the organisation
- involvement with the training of other parent representatives
- contribution to the development of policy wherever appropriate.

The last of these responsibilities may well involve changing or adapting policies to update them or amplify them or make them in other ways a more appropriate framework for decision-making. Given this kind of involvement and eventual production of appropriate policies, conflicts should not arise between the policies of the organisation and the considered views of the parent representative. If a fundamental disagreement does arise, the parent representative will need to make a judgement on whether it is possible in honesty to continue to represent the point of view of the organisation. If this is not possible, then the parent is no longer participating as a representative but as an individual and should take action accordingly.

The School P & C Association

The local P & C Association is a long established tradition in

Australian schooling. It has performed a fund-raising role on which governments have come to rely more and more heavily. But its role has perforce been a limited one and its image can truthfully be described as dreary. Meade,[1] in his study of the Educational Experience of Sydney High School Students reports that only four per cent of parents interviewed said that they attended P & C meetings. Given the formality and triviality of many P & C meetings, the other parents can hardly be blamed for staying away.

The development of participative decision-making can further erode the foundations of P & C Associations and parent organisations at other levels since these, unlike teacher organisations, lack an industrial/professional role to guarantee their continued existence. As school boards grow in number, status and power, they tend to attract the most able and the most interested parents. There is already noticeable (in the ACT, for example) a decline in the numbers of people willing to devote themselves to P & C work compared with the decade before 1974. Given a strong and continuing local community interest in the school, this might not be thought to matter; but a decline in the P & C movement brings considerable disadvantage for schooling and parent participation. The P & C Association operates, or should operate as a catchment for community interest in the local school. Because it does not have the overall and day-to-day responsibilities of the school board it has the potential to provide the substantial research, discussion and general support on which the parent members of the school governing body can draw. It can also make itself responsible for providing information to parents and community, widening parent participation, for keeping the school council in touch with parent views and interests, and for ensuring that parent members of school councils are there because of their concern for the education of children and not for political status or other irrelevant motives. Moreover, P & C Associations provide a means of maintaining a community overview of education at regional, State and national levels - a function which could not easily be provided by other means. These and other issues of the future of the P & C movement require serious exploration by parent organisations as a corollary to participation in schooling.

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The responsibilities for a parent accepting a role in participative decision-making have already been adequately indicated through this paper. They are many and various. They all require time and dedication and involve a great deal of reading, thinking and argument. The process will give rise to tension and frustration. A sense of humour and a sense of proportion are essential equipment for every participant - but occasionally the rewards will come in the shape of a happier school atmosphere, a more relevant curriculum, a better understanding between teachers and parents, more parents participating in their children's schooling. The main results will not be seen in the short-term or by those who now contribute to them; they lie in the future of the society and of its children.

REFERENCES - CHAPTER 7

1. Phil Meade. The Educational Experience of Sydney High School Students. Report No. 2. Canberra: AGPS, 1981, p.188.

WHAT IS THE IDEAL

YEARS 7-10 CURRICULUM IN THE ACT?

Paper given at ACT Secondary
Principals' Conference

C.W. Collins

September 1982

What is the Ideal Years 7-10 Curriculum in the ACT?

The question which I have been asked to address here today has given me a few bad weeks. It is in fact the major question with which, I am sure, we have all been concerned for at least 5 years now, and I, at least, must confess that I am not much closer to an easy, tight, simple answer than I was when that worrying began.

I think, therefore, that the most useful approach I can take for you this morning is to share with you some aspects of those 5 years exploration and those parts of the answer about which I do have some confidence. This is not just the most useful approach for you, it is also the approach with which I feel most comfortable because I am a strong believer in the ACT's decentralized system and so am happier in the roles of provocateur and stimulator-of-thinking than in the role of an expert telling secondary schools what they ought to be doing.

One further preliminary: I have worn two hats as an academic, in relation to this question. First, I have been involved in research on public opinion about secondary schooling. Second, I am an educational historian by training and maintain an habitual historical perspective. It is also important to confess, in addition, that I am a parent with children in the ACT system, indeed, with a child in 6th grade primary facing Years 7-10 immediately ahead. All three perspectives, two academic and one personal, will necessarily intrude.

The appropriate place from which to begin the substance of this address is the observation that the curriculum of the junior secondary years has reached crisis point throughout the Western World. There are obvious manifestations of that crisis within many schools, particularly within schools which care for the vast majority of children who are not born to upper class or professional parents. Secondary students are often disruptive and generally restless. Many see school as a combination of irrelevant effort and pointless routine. Their lack of enthusiasm and difficult behaviour drags down staff morale so that genuine learning encounters between staff and students are reduced in number and are less profitable.

There are a handful of readily apparent reasons for this general malaise. The unemployment crisis is an obvious one. High youth unemployment blocks the escape route for students who find school meaningless, and make school seem a cul-de-sac from which there is no dignified exit. The unemployment crisis also has affected parent and student attitudes towards the value of schooling. Once many would go through years of relatively meaningless learning experiences because the certificate they got at the end had a high instrumental value in the job market. As that certificate becomes less valuable so there is inevitably less uncritical acceptance of what the school is doing.

Another cause of low morale is the political drubbing of public schooling during the 1970's and the re-emergence of private schooling as an alternative favoured by Coalition Government funding policies. Both the funding and the attempt to submerge discussion of it under attacks on public schools are, of course, heavily related to the economic crisis already referred to. Many of those who can afford to do so are being pressured into believing that they must buy especially favourable positions for their children in the fight for scarce career places. The scapegoating of public secondary schooling has been disgraceful, adding to difficulties already created for schools by circumstances beyond their walls.

However, these few obvious aspects of crisis have in many ways, simply served to uncover (for professionals, not journalists) deeper, hidden problems which it had been easier not to face before. We now, it seems to me, have little choice but to think them through.

First, we outgrew, many years ago, our historical foundations as institutions preparing an elite few for tertiary study. For many years now we have been catering for a full cross-section of young people. But we have never argued through or reached professional agreement (let alone community agreement) on what sort of curriculum this should entail. Traditional Australian tertiary entrance subjects - maths, science, etc. - still dominate. We have neither killed the old way of thinking about the junior secondary school, nor openly grasped and felt happy with a different, broader view of the school's curriculum.

Further, below and inextricably related to any good solution to the crisis in curriculum are academic crises, crises related to the social arguments underlying secondary schooling. I am referring to the bitter debates and evidence surrounding the equality of opportunity myth, the notion of fixed intelligence, and the role of schooling in social mobility.

Many public secondary teachers used to see themselves as seekers after and fosterers of academic talent. Indeed this, I would argue, is still a common view and a justification both for keeping core academic subjects and for putting your best academic staff to work with the best students.

We know a lot more now about the social nature of what is tested by IQ testing: that these tests, just like the school curriculum itself heavily favour middle class children not necessarily because of anything innate, nor because they work harder, but because schools start from the assumptions and values of middle class home backgrounds. We know that rather than social mobility increasing as secondary schooling has become universal throughout the Western World, for at least the past generation, social mobility has been slowing down.

Thus some of the social argument roots for current educational practices have been killed. So far the effects have only troubled academics and some well read and sensitive teachers, but inevitably the effects will spread to the whole educational plant. Indeed we obviously cannot reach any abiding solutions to our more manifest curricular problems without starting our thinking at this social argument level.

If one looks first at the economic crisis beyond the school and its effects on schooling, then turns to examine the social arguments for current schooling arrangements, and then looks again within the junior secondary school, it becomes clear that what we are facing is nothing less than a total crisis of purpose. We are not really sure what we are there for. Secondary schools may well be serving a child-care function and keeping youth from the employment market, but these ought to be incidental side-effects of an institution which is actually achieving something educationally for those who attend it. What ought that "something" to be? We are no longer sure.

Other education sectors have a publicly accepted core purpose. That of primary schools is to teach "the Basics", of Universities, to teach and carry out research freely along the major academic paths of Western culture, of TAFE Colleges to offer specific skill training and leisure education programs. These purposes, and many others run as threads through the junior secondary school, but they do not combine readily into a meaningful whole and nor are they peripheral to another central purpose which is unique to the secondary years.

The crisis of purpose is particularly acute in the ACT. Our secondary schools were beheaded in the mid-70's and many good staff as well as the old academic curricular excuses were then lost to the new colleges. At least one difficult Year 10 student to whom I have spoken this year, argued that he might as well spend his junior secondary years stirring because there was little point in working, when one had to make a fresh start, both in subject matter and reputation, at college in Year 11.

A great deal of thought and planning and finance went into the new colleges. Very little attention or money went into re-thinking the junior secondary school, which became at that point a new institution, arguably much more difficult to teach in than the colleges.

It should by now be clear that worrying about putting the finishing touches to an ideal curriculum is rather Utopian. Our problems with the Years 7-10 curriculum are much more fundamental. We need, in fact, to go back to the drawing board and to put together some very basic curriculum plans underpinned by some good arguments. This means that we need to come to some agreement with our communities about the corner stones of a junior curriculum. What are its fundamental purposes to be? Then we must re-think our school structures and curricular arrangements in the light of this agreement. Necessarily this is a slow process, but it is important, morale boosting, and I think, in the long run, unavoidable.

Perspectives from Research on Public Opinion

One way of exploring the purposes of the junior secondary years is to go out and ask the schools' clients what they want.

I have been involved in two studies which have done just that. Expectations of Secondary Schools (1978) asked some 3,000 students, 1,000 parents and 500 teachers across New South Wales what they saw as the important aims of secondary schooling. The Attitudes to Schooling Project which produced Looking Backwards (1980) asked ex-students who had been through a few transition years to reflect upon their schooling. Employers and other adults who worked closely with these ex-students during their transition years were also asked. What answers did we get? Do the schools' clients agree on what secondary schools should be doing?

Well, there was surprising agreement on what is wrong and there is a lot to be gained from a thoughtful examination of the range of suggestions about what ought to be done.

There were two major complaints about secondary schooling. First, there was widespread agreement that too much emphasis was placed on "bookish" knowledge. Much of the curriculum was experienced as irrelevant. Very few could see much intrinsic value in what they learned in maths, science, history, etc. In other words, the traditional academic curriculum was experienced as both dominant and cut off from reality. Moreover, the emphasis on traditional subjects had had ripple effects across the school. One effect was the down-grading of non-academic subjects: these, no matter how intrinsically valuable, were seen as low status. Another effect was that less academically competent students felt themslves to be less valued by the school, to be seen as lesser persons. Staff were seen as valuing students through the tunnel vision of competence in their own subject area. A third spin-off was the felt lack of real subject choices by many students, because of streaming, because of line systems, because staff are chosen for competence in a narrow band of academic subjects and choose to teach in them, and because of the importance of taking high-status subjects.

The second major area of complaint was about school as an environment for adolescents. There was considerable concern, by those who had left school, about the authoritarian nature of schooling. This was seen by them, and several employers, as inappropriate as an institutional environment for young people growing towards adulthood.

Personal relationships with staff stands out as a crucial area. Many students did not feel they got to know staff as persons or that the staff got to know or care about them as individuals while those who did experience personal care from staff, saw this as the high point of their school experience.

Indeed the general thrust of complaints in this second area suggests a new public awareness of adolescents as persons at a particular stage in life who need to be helped find out who they are, how they might grow towards a responsible, satisfying life which makes a contribution to the whole society. Schooling was seen as currently having little to do with these central issues of adolescence.

What clients thought the secondary school ought to be doing related to these complaints. They wanted schooling to be more clearly relevant to the needs of adolescents and to the demands of adult life. They ranged, however, from pretty simplistic to sophisticated in how they saw this being done.

Some just spoke of a more practical orientation. They wanted junior secondary goals which related to understanding the world of work and to coping with adult life - money management, the basics, health, the law and so on. This is the view of most unemployed and of TAFE students and staff.

Others believed that, while practical knowledge was important, it needed to be combined with the kind of personal and cognitive development which would enable students to get on in life. Learning outcomes like "knowing how to get information for yourself" and "being able to think clearly" were seen as crucial. So were "interpersonal skills" and "developing independence of judgement". These people argued that life would involve important decisions about career choices, job changes, marriage choices, friendship and business choices and they wanted schools to give students the skills they would need to make a good job of adult life, not just to survive in it. These "progressives" as I call them, are, I would estimate, the majority of people in our society. Those advocating simply a more practical orientation, the "anti-intellectuals", may be vocal, particularly when encouraged by some industrialists, but they are fewer.

A small group of respondents agreed with both the above. That is they agreed that straight practical know-how was important and that personal and cognitive development were also important. But they placed these in the context of a much more sophisticated view of what was required to live a full adult life in our society. These clients included some employers, university staff and students, and a number of social service personnel working with the unemployed. Their view corresponds almost exactly with the thrust of the Schools Commission document Schooling for 15-16 Year Olds.

They argued that the junior schooling years must be detached from tertiary preparatory study and treated separately as years of preparation for adult life. These are the equivalent of the initiation years of most non-Western societies, if you like. There are things which students must know to live full adult lives in our society and the role of the junior secondary school is to ensure that those things are learned. They were arguing for relevance, but relevance for them was not just a skills and

know how or even a developmental matter. A relevant education would help students to understand the society within which they are to live so that they are able to contribute to it as full citizens, as full adult persons. Adult life involves taking part in a free society in a democratic process. Students don't just need the basics, or to know how to look after their own immediate interests. They need to understand social issues and to be able to participate rather than simply be acquiescent or self-serving employees in social structures they don't understand.

Historian's Perspectives

Where does client opinion leave us then? The answer is that it gives us valuable insights but still leaves us with many problems. First, there is not agreement about future directions in any sense that a clever politician could not quickly undo. Second, in some of the areas where clients almost agree, many professional educators would feel bound to disagree and to fight hard. An obvious example is the area of aesthetic education which the vast majority of respondents, perhaps because their own poor education has left them aesthetically blind, see as quite unimportant, but which has been central to the Western tradition (in my view rightly) of what makes for an educated person.

A further problem is even more vexing. A social phenomenon occurred at the same time as these studies were undertaken, which casts a rather odd shadow over them. I am referring to the building up of the private educational sector and the development of long waiting lists for private schools. While parents were prepared in a survey to give full reign to their imaginations about what they would ideally want junior secondary schooling to be like, the practice of many suggests a flight from the level of reform we already have in public secondary schools to the very traditional academic curriculum of the private secondary sector. Although complaining to us about such a curriculum, parents clearly see it as part of the way the real world works and as necessary to "get on". While that is the way they see the real world, indeed, while it is the way the real world is, they are not likely to allow their children to be guinea pigs in an experimental junior secondary school program. This necessarily places limits on how and where we can begin to find a new sense of direction for our schools.

Thus, it is not going to be easy for us to establish new and worthwhile purposes for the junior secondary school. Any solution will require us not just to reach some level of agreement amongst ourselves, but also to have thought the matter through with our clients. At the very least we shall have to reach agreement with most of that large block of "progressive" clients. In addition, any solution will involve us in politics within the educational area, and, together with our clients, in the widest possible political arena. To solve the secondary school's problems we shall have to lose our political naivete about education.

As I worte those last few paragraphs my perspective began to shift to that of the historian. It is an easy shift to make for the sorts of things clients said in the public opinion studies were fascinating for an historian. In current opinion one can see the effects of various historical traditions about education.

I would argue, both from the Expectations data and from historical evidence, that we have five main traditions about schooling in Australia, indeed throughout the West. The strongest one, perhaps, is the Academic tradition, the notion that secondary schools are there to introduce students to the major academic fields of the culture and to prepare them for tertiary entrance in those fields.

Another strong tradition is the view that schools are there to serve a Social Control function. Many recent educational historians have been arguing that this, indeed, has been the overriding purpose of the public school, more particularly of the primary years. Schools have existed to insist that children submit to routines, learn to be punctual, obedient to authority, conforming, neat and no trouble to those further up, submitting to others' purposes for them without rebellion. Schools have been there to teach children that what happens to them will be seen as their own fault (low IQ, poor home background) and that they are to accept their lot as "natural".

A third strong tradition, is an Industrial one. This tradition is that schools are there simply to churn out the skills required by the job market. If that market only requires basic skills then that is all the public school should teach. If training is required for particular vocations then the secondary school should take that on board. Our modern comprehensive high schools absorbed both the clients and some of the spirit of the junior secondary domestic science, agricultural, technical and commercial high schools.

Fourthly, we have a Romantic tradition which has come down from the nineteenth century Romantic Movement and been augmented on the way be Freudian insight, by the science of child development and by resulting educational theory. The secondary school is there to provide a stimulating, but secure, learning environment, to help students to find and foster their interests, to treat students as individual developing persons.

Finally, there is the Social Reconstruction tradition. Schools are seen as a means of enlightenment for all children who, through an increased understanding of their society and the development of valuable knowledge and skills can help to build a better society and a better world. Public schooling has always had strong links to this view.

Each of these five traditions has support in our society. Sometimes, indeed, people will support some of them for their own children but others for the rest of society, like the personnel manager who argued within the Academic tradition in relation to his own child, but wanted the Industrial tradition applied to the majority of others. When schools decide to educate children within one of these traditions or choose to educate some within one and others in another, they are in fact making political choices, choices which will work in the interests of some groups rather than others in our society. The Social Control tradition has obvious beneficiaries, and many victims. So does the Industrial one. Maintaining the Academic tradition and its tertiary entrance links works to the benefit of those who enter school from home backgrounds which bestow cultural capital as Peirre Bourdieu has spent a decade pointing out. The Romantic tradition, which is linked to the view expressed by our Progressive majority, may well offer what is required for the average, routine, white-collar life-style.

Listening to such respondents while reflecting upon the social history surrounding each tradition, is a necessary exercise both to help us interpret public opinion and to help us lose our political naivete. The historical perspective shows us the political context of schooling and the necessarily political nature of any curriculum we intend to advocate as ideal. It also alerts us to much else - why we have the curricular hodge-podge we now have, why elite schools don't have the same pressure to offer a wide curricular range, and why constructive change for the junior secondary school is not going to be easy.

Parent Perspectives

We are now getting closer to the heart of the matter, a sense of what curricular directions are possible and what I personally, as a parent, see as crucial.

I would argue on the basis of the above public opinion and historical analysis, that there are three general directions in which public junior secondary schooling may go. For me and my family, only one of these is acceptable.

One direction would be for private, fee-collecting (but heavily tax supported) schools to offer the only serious academic secondary education available. Such schools can keep out many disruptive children because their parents are unable or unwilling to pay fees and, further, they are free to expel taxpayers' children who prove difficult. Thus they can cater exclusively to those parents who are anxious for their more controlled children to be freed from disruptive elements and to concentrate upon acquiring the level of cultural capital required for entry to high status professions.

Junior secondary public schools would then probably offer a "progressive curriculum" to the left-overs, a caring environment in which cognitive and personal development skills are offered in addition to a very basic education. We are well on our way down this stratified road.

Another direction would be to aim to introduce divisions back into the junior secondary school itself - special programs for the "gifted", wishy-washy skills programs of the progressive kind for the majority, and transition programs for those falling out the bottom. The Coalition Government is pushing us hard down this road too.

Neither of these directions is acceptable to me. Nor should they be to any educator who has a clear understanding of educational politics. Both solutions favour certain sectors of the community and betray others. Both give up on the very best tradition at the heart of public schooling, the tradition that all children no matter what their parentage, no matter what assets they bring with them to school, have the right to a full and valuable education.

The best public school tradition is grounded in a concern for children and a desire to do what is best for them, grounded in a concern that children grow up to be as complete and fulfilled human beings as possible. The best of the public school tradition says that the school is not there to serve particular interests in society nor to preserve or prop up all of the status quo. It is there to protect the right to know of the next generation, to protect there rights to full lives, if necessary <u>against</u> other interests which would wish to exploit that generation.

I do not think we can get far in pursuing an ideal curriculum until we recover that tradition and the courage to pursue it. We have had too close a hand-in-glove relationship with industry, with government and with the press, feeling obliged to respond to every outside pressure and trend. We need, instead, a hand-in-hand direct relationship with parents who, like us, have the interests of their own children at heart and are more likely than other sociatal instrumentalities to expand their horizons to place the interests of all children first.

The third alternative for me is to pursue this best tradition and to think through much harder exactly what fulfilling its purposes would involve and where, given current politics, one might successfully start making change. Both public opinion studies and an historical perspective on the present can help with these questions.

An obvious place to start is by changing the environment of the school into a more appropriate one for adolescents. There are virtually no external political obstacles to creating school structures which enable staff and students to get to know and

care about each other better, provided caring is not confused with indulgence, lack of limits and no hard work. A caring school must look after the best interests of those in its trust which means taking the teaching and curricular tasks seriously, not simply being "progressive" and teaching trivia.

Changing the curriculum itself will be difficult but it can be done. We must continually refine our exact path, but I think the general direction is clear. It involves a commitment to the best of the public school tradition. It involves, as the major purpose, the development of full adult persons and full participants in society. Looking Backwards suggests what a number of wise persons in the community have argued that this would entail. Schooling for 15-16 Year Olds sets out similar arguments.

I think that a useful way to find our exact path within the general guidelines we have is to use the idea of "powerful knowledge" as a compass. There are at least three ways in which knowledge can be powerful. First, it can be instrumentally powerful, that is, it can have value as cultural capital often as a certificate which unlocks societal doors. Second, it can be powerful in increasing one's understanding of reality, personal, social and material. Third, it can be powerful in helping one to act - helping one to relate to, to influence, to take part in aspects of reality. You may wish to expand this list of important kinds of powerful knowledge further.

Students have a right to these three kinds and possibly others. Indeed, they need all three to grow towards adulthood in the ways we have in mind. To create the ideal curriculum we have to think through the interaction of at least those three strands, Further, a curriculum concerned about powerful knowledge will draw on all curricular traditions. The Academic and Industrial traditions both offer instrumental power. All five can contribute to increasing insight into reality and teaching one powerful ways to act, to relate to that reality.

While these general guidelines suggest major curricular developments in the long term, I would argue against conspicuous changes in curricular subject boundaries at this point. They are not necessary and they are likely to cause panic and a stampede out of public schools. I don't think we need to be fancy on the surface.

Instead we need to help teachers face the powerful knowledge issue within their own discipline areas. I see a considerable amount of teaching, when I visit schools, which I regard as utterly trivial - memorizing Captain Cook's voyages, memorizing obscure chemistry formulae. We must ask the questions "what is powerful historical knowledge?", "what is powerful scientific knowledge?" and so on, and learn to answer these questions within the guidelines set by our new sense of purpose. Not only is this the politically sensible place to start if we want real change and not just superficial show.

When we've got our heads straight in our own particular curriculum areas, that's the time to start thinking about whether we need to actually alter the way the curriculum is organized in terms of subject departments. At that point we shall be able to see and understand more clearly the most powerful combinations of subject matter and necessary specialization. We shall also be able to give good reasons and argue persuasively with parents, our partners in this educational venture.

This then is what is required. Create a more caring environment. Develop a clear sense of purpose for the junior secondary school as distinct from other levels of schooling. Develop a finely tuned sense of what is powerful and what is trivial in relation to that purpose. With those three tall, but possible and exciting, orders we can build superb junior secondary schools which graduate mature persons whom universities, employers, indeed the whole society should welcome.

REPORTS OF THE

INTERSTATE SUBJECT CONSULTANTS

FOREWORD

Although members of the Review Committee visited all high schools, some colleges and some primary schools, to speak with administrators, teachers, students and parents there was not time, nor did the members have the expertise, to make detailed judgements about individual subject areas across the system.

Accordingly, with the approval of the Chief Education Officer and the Schools Authority, and at the invitation of individual schools and subject departments, eleven experts in particular subject fields were invited from New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria for periods of one or two weeks. Each consultant visited a sample of four high schools, spending 1-2 days in each. Altogether more than half the high schools were visited. In addition some visited primary schools and colleges. The names of the consultants, their terms of reference and their reports are published in the succeeding pages.

The Review Committee takes this opportunity of thanking the consultants for their dedication to a very demanding task, and for their very professional reports. While we, as a group or as individuals, may not agree with everything that is contained in the reports we print them as documents of importance to the system and to all teachers, not just those in high schools nor just in the ACT. The reports have been edited only to remove school identification and to achieve a certain degree of unity in presentation. The perceptions and recommendations are untouched. We stress that the purpose of the exercise was not to evaluate individual schools but it was an attempt to gain an impression of system-wide trends. We believe that this was achieved, although in some cases organizational perceptions might have been modified if a different sample had been chosen.

We thank, also, the Directors-General of the three States for releasing their personnel and the ACT Schools Authority for approving and funding the project.

Not least we must record our appreciation of the willingness of schools, teachers and other officers of the Authority who co-operated so readily in the activity. We quote some comments from consultants:

> "I would like to publicly thank the various schools visited for the hospitality extended to me during this review. In particular, I would like to thank the teachers concerned for their openness and professionalism in allowing free access to their records and classrooms."

"The willing co-operation of the principals, assistant principals, band two teachers and their faculty staffs is gratefully acknowledged, with appreciation of their willingness to undergo extensive questioning and involvement in lengthy discussions. Equally I wish to thank Mr Lyell Harris and Mrs Maryanne Gore for their organizational skill, their interest, and their pleasant co-operation as well as the Chief Education Officer, Dr Greg Hancock, for the invitation to participate in a challenging and most interesting exercise."

The consultants were:

Art	Mr Tony Lenten, Victoria
English	Dr Claire Woods, South Australia
History	Mr Max Delaney, New South Wales
Home Economics	Ms Betty Mander, Victoria
Industrial Arts	Mr Brent Corish, New South Wales
Languages	Mr Jim Docking, New South Wales
Mathematics and Computing	Mr Peter Sandery, South Australia
Music	Miss Ruth Buxton, South Australia
Physical Education	Mr Barry Stanton, South Australia
Science & Agriculture	Mr Ivan Light, Victoria
Social Science	Mr Laurie Lewis, Victoria.

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

AIMS:

1. Congruence between subject aims and school philosophy; also between these two and Authority philosophy and priority policies as listed in "Sources of Existing Curriculum Policy".

2. Appropriateness of aims at all levels.

CURRICULUM:

1. Process by which curriculum is developed; (a) whole school, (b) within the department, (c) at individual class level.

2. Are there mechanisms for ensuring integration or co-operation in curriculum between departments?

3. What parties are involved in curriculum development at these levels?

4. Congruence between subject aims and (a) content of written curriculum, (b) curriculum as delivered.

5. Appropriateness of written curriculum.

6. Congruence between written curriculum and classroom activities.

7. What steps are taken to ensure articulation of curriculum between Years 6 and 7 and Years 10 and 11?

8. To what extent are Years 7 to 10 courses influenced by teachers' perceptions of the need for preparation for college?

9. Problems caused by mobility. How is correct placement of new students assured? How do individual teachers cope?

10. Are student assessment practices congruent with stated aims and curriculum?

11. What moderation procedures are followed?

12. How are individual subjects and the department's whole offering evaluated? Are changes made as a result of evaluation?

13. Is the process of reporting to parents adequate? Is there provision for reporting apart from the schools' formal procedures?

TEACHERS

1. Are teachers appropriately qualified?

2. Are teaching styles consonant with school philosophy and aims? Are the schools tolerant of innovative teaching?

3. How much professional support should teachers expect from subject department, school and Authority? How much do they get?

RESOURCES

1. Comments on the adequacy of facilities, resources and staffing available to the department.

ART

Foreword:

This report is based on the direct experience of four ACT High Schools. Two days were spent in each school, where discussions were held with the administration and staff concerned, course programs and descriptions and other documents analysed, and numerous classes in action observed. It was also possible to make a brief visit to a college, and to take part in an excursion to the Australian National Gallery conducted by its educational officers. Reference has also been made to reports, policy statements and other written material produced by the ACT Schools Authority and individual schools.

It goes without saying that there can be difficulties in generalising about a school system from such a relatively brief experience. However, it is believed that the general picture presented in this report is valid, balanced, and accurately reflects the situation as it exists.

If necessary, further corroboration could be organised by the Schools Authority to confirm particular points, or the basis on which specific recommendations have been made.

Introduction:

This report is divided into two main sections. The first is to do with the provision of art education generally in ACT High Schools. The second, which is concerned more with the actual art teaching and course development, deals specifically with the questions raised in the initial brief. It is not possible to deal at all adequately with the second aspect unless it is seen in the context of the broader issues and concerns raised in the first.

It should be very clearly understood that while this report is very critical of the opportunities provided by the schools for the bulk of students to participate in worthwhile art programs, it is not intended to be a general criticism of the quality of the art teachers or art teaching observed. Given the lack of support provided by the system as a whole, and by the schools, for art education (e.g. supply of staff, allocation of time and resources) it is remarkable that the standard of teaching and the experiences provided, are as good as they were found to be. These matters will be dealt with more adequately in later sections.

A. The Provision of Art Education in ACT High Schools

The Schools Authority and individual schools must recognise that there are urgent and pressing problems associated with the provision of art education oppprtunities for all students at the High School level. It must also be recognised that these problems are not static, but are indeed worsening ones.

The 1978 ACT Schools Authority policy statement on "Education and the Arts" referred to a yawning gap between the claims made by those in the educational community on the benefits of the arts on the one hand, and the attention actually being paid to them on the other. It must be acknowledged that since 1978 the position has deteriorated even further. The gap is now a chasm!

During the review it was common to find the situation where a school which previously had a staff of 4 or 5 in the late seventies or early eighties, has now been reduced to only 1 or 2 staff. (The number of art staff in the schools visited ranged from 1 to 2.) It was also common to find the situation where a majority of students would take art for either a term, semester, or part of a semester, and have no further experience of it for the remainder of their school career.

The general trend is clear. Further research could establish on an empirical basis the major findings presented here that art is drastically declining in terms of the number of students taking the subject. It appears that art teachers and students have carried the brunt of the declining student enrolments in the ACT.

(A more general problem to which the ACT Schools Authority and schools could usefully address themselves is how can a fair distribution of resources be achieved in a period of declining school numbers.)

At present the students are being denied access to art programs, and to a genuinely broad and general education.

B. <u>The Quality of Art Teaching in ACT High Schools</u>

Despite the inevitable impact of the situation described in the previous sections on areas such as faculty leadership, the variety and diversity of programs offered, the professional development of teachers and the allocation of resources; the quality of art teaching observed was never less than satisfactory. There was considerable evidence of very competent, and in some cases highly stimulating teaching. The teachers generally were well trained, and very committed to their students.

It was somewhat disappointing to find an absence of significantly innovative programs. However, it must be recognised that the overall climate of the school system has not been conducive to the development of innovative art programs. There is a definite need to encourage the development of new courses and programs. Subsequent recommendations deal with this question.

In most schools observed the actual programs were more impressive than the documentation of them. While the facilities and resources were generally of a good to high quality, there are serious problems associated with the lack of students taking the subject, and the effect of this on the

provision of materials. Art materials and supplies are very expensive items, and it is difficult to make savings when the total student pool is small.

A fairly low level of integration between faculties was noted in what is a predominately a school system with a high level of compartmentalisation. There were examples of individual co-operation between faculties in some schools, for example, between art and drama, and art and textiles. Further avenues for meaningful integration should be explored and encouraged.

In general, the evaluation and reporting methods in the art area were identical to those adopted by the school as a whole. Under the circumstances this appears to be a reasonable approach. One particular organisation pattern was a source of concern. Some students were locked into art at years 9 and 10 for the two years. This has the effect of preventing other students from re-entering an art program at Year 10 if they decided to take another elective at Year 9.

Links with the primary feeder schools were not well developed. The variety of experiences provided in the primary schools were considered to make this difficult. Despite individual contacts between staff concerned, there appear to be few formal links beteen high school and colleges, because of the felt need to maintain the autonomy of each.

Greater efforts should be made in the art appreciation area, in particular, the investigation of methods which are not dependent upon chronological survey approaches. The setting up of curriculum development teams as suggested in recommendation 2.21 (below) could provide teachers with guidance and support in this area.

Many of the specific questions relating to the quality of art teaching are dealt with in the following recommendations.

C. Recommendations

The recommendations in this report have been grouped for convenience under the following headings:-

1. General Recommendations
2. Specific Recommendations
   - 2.1 Employment Opportunities and Conditions
   - 2.2 Curriculum Development
   - 2.3 Professional Development
   - 2.4 Parent and Community Awareness.

1. General Recommendations

It is recommended that the ACT Schools Authority, individual schools, and their communities should recognise that, for a variety of reasons, there are serious inadequacies in the provision of art education opportunities for students in ACT High Schools. As a consequence, it is recommended that

immediate action needs to be taken to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to benefit from well designed and developed art programs and experiences for all, or a significant period, of their secondary schooling.

Comment:

The background justification for this recommendation has been covered briefly in the introduction. The basic point to be considered is that most students undertake only a cursory and relatively superficial experience in art for as little as one term, or one semester, for the whole of their secondary schooling. A number of further points follow from this. First, only a very small proportion of students have an extended or sequential contact with art beyond this introductory experience. Second, because of the decline in staffing and the general demise of art education, flourishing art facilities have not developed which are necessary if diverse and stimulating programs are to be fostered. Third, it is obvious that art teachers are under-represented in positions of status and authority in schools as a result of existing hierarchical organisational arrangements. Inevitably, under these circumstances morale suffers and the problems alluded to throughout this report are further compounded.

1.2 It is recommended that the ACT Schools Authority together with the individual schools establish appropriate structures, processes and mechanisms to ensure that the significant and fundamental changes required (as outlined in the body of this report and detailed in subsequent recommendations) are implemented as a matter of urgency.

Comment:

The situation as set out in the body of this report will only improve if the Schools Authority and the schools work constructively together to bring about needed change. A range of approaches will need to be implemented over both a short and long term. Subsequent recommendations suggest possible lines of action.

It is suggested that the Schools Authority itself should assume the overall responsibility for ensuring that all students are able to participate in, and enjoy, the benefits of well organised and taught art programs for a significant period of their secondary schooling.

This could be achieved through the adoption of a number of measures ranging from long term professional development programs, to executive action such as nominating that a certain proportion of teachers in each school must be trained art teachers. These, and related measures, would ensure that existing practices and procedures which are so clearly antithetical to art (and the arts generally) are not allowed to continue; whether they be in the name of concern for "academic" education or the need to retain "school autonomy".

1.3 It is recommended that as a matter of urgent priority there should be a re-examination of the Schools Authority's own position on the educational value of the arts, and in particular of the visual arts.

Comment:

In specific terms it is suggested that there needs to be a re-examination of the "Education and the Arts" policy statement issued by the Schools Authority in 1978. It is recommended that this statement should be rigorously scrutinised, and redrafted where necessary, in the light of 1.1 and the range of other recommendations made throughout this report. It is recommended that any revision should clearly set out the value of art education in the total education program of the school, as well as its value for all students. It might also be a useful exercise to monitor the effects of the 1978 statement since its initial distribution.

The Authority should also give careful consideration to the impact of its own statements on curriculum. For example, the draft position paper on "Future Directions in Curriculum" (Supplement to the Schools Bulletin No. 113 of 3 March 1983) states that the curriculum is concerned with the "moral, intellectual, emotional, physical and social development of the pupil".

The failure to recognise the "aesthetic" or "artistic" is extremely unfortunate in two main ways. Firstly, it indicates a general lack of awareness of this important dimension of education; and secondly, it fails to provide adequate leadership to schools, many of whom adopt statements such as those quoted as general school aims.

1.4 It is recommended that the ACT Schools Authority, together with individual schools, should initiate a wide ranging investigation and debate on the importance and role of art (including craft) in providing a broad general education for all students at the secondary level.

Comment:

This is seen to be an on-going process, and could perhaps be part of a more general re-examination of the role and purpose of High Schools in the ACT. In the interim action needs to be taken to overcome the existing unsatisfactory situation. There is a need to raise the awareness of School administrators, teachers, members of school boards and school communities of the importance of the arts in the total development of students. This can best be achieved through a variety of means, a number of which are covered in subsequent recommendations.

It may be that because of the persistent and continuing neglect in this area there needs to be a period of positive discrimination in the allocation of staff and resources, at both the Schools Authority and individual school level, until fully functioning art and craft faculties can be developed.

2. Specific Recommendations

2.1 Employment Opportunities and Conditions Recommendations

2.11 It is recommended that the ACT Schools Authority in conjunction with individual schools investigates methods of improving the employment opportunities and career prospects of art teachers.

2.12 It is recommended that the ACT Schools Authority instigates an examination as to why so few teachers with a background in art education occupy senior positions (e.g. band 2,3,4) in ACT Schools.

2.13 It is recommended that increased opportunities be provided for art teachers from other school systems, and recent graduates from tertiary art education institutions, to gain employment in ACT High Schools.

Comment:

The overwhelming thrust of this report is that too little art is being taught in ACT High Schools. It follows then that employment opportunities must be created to redress this balance. (For example, one school visited with approximately 500 students had only 1 art teacher, while no school had more than 2.)

Clearly there are many problems associated with the distribution of resources in a school system with a declining school population. It appears that the solution adopted has been to allow certain areas such as art to waste away to avoid making cutbacks in other areas. As a consequence of this, the overall balance and scope of the curriculum in ACT High Schools has been adversely effected, as have the employment opportunities and conditions for art teachers at all levels.

The problem is increased when it is recognised that there are so few art teachers in positions of authority in ACT High Schools. This has a distorting effect when policy questions are discussed at the senior administration level in the schools, or within the Authority. The effects of this imbalance are further magnified because of the highly "departmentalised" nature of the ACT School System.

The aim of 2.13 is to create a more open system, and to overcome some of the rigidity of thinking, and the isolation, produced in a static system.

2.14 It is recommended that action be taken by the Schools Authority and individual schools to ensure that there is a fully trained Art Co-ordinator at the band 2 level in each school.

Comment:

While it could be argued that there should be a general loosening up of the connection between subject areas and band 2 positions, it is necessary to take action in the interim.

Band 2 Art Co-ordinators are needed to provide direction in off setting existing critical imbalances in the amount of art offered to students in relation to other subjects (and to other states); to provide educational leadership in a depressed area of the curriculum; to plan the development of more stimulating and comprehensive programs than those generally available; and to help lift the status of the subject in the eyes of the school community through representation as a Head of Departments on Curriculum Committees etc. on the same basis as other subjects. The creation of these band 2 positions would also open up career opportunities at the band 1 level.

2.15 It is recommended that consideration be given to establishing procedures to ensure that there is a greater degree of movement (both transfers and promotions) of teachers between High Schools in the ACT.

Comment:

Greater mobility of staffing (while at the same time retaining a necessary level of stability) would ensure that there is a greater degree of cross fertilisation of ideas, and that teachers are required to face the stimulus of new situations from time to time.

2.16 It is further recommended that very serious consideration be given to the establishment of procedures to ensure that there is movement between teachers employed in High Schools and Colleges.

Comment:

A number of advantages could be expected to flow from such a move. Many of these have been covered in previous recommendations. Not only would this move enable there to be greater mobility between High Schools and Colleges, but that each would gain a greater understanding of the role of the other if teachers were able to experience working in both situations.

2.17 It is recommended that the Schools Authority in consultation with the schools and other relevant interest groups (e.g. tertiary training institutions) should set down the minimum academic requirements needed for a person to be employed as an art teacher.

Comment:

While there are without doubt advantages of allowing a teacher to move across subject areas, there are a number of difficulties associated with it in the ACT situation. These

range from the lack of employment opportunities for fully qualified teachers, to the need for highly trained and skilled teachers to cope with specialist areas such as ceramics, print-making, drawing and art appreciation. Any teacher currently employed to teach art who does not meet the criteria set down should be given the opportunity to acquire the appropriate qualifications through study leave.

2.2 Curriculum Development Recommendations

2.21 It is recommended that Secondary Art Curriculum Project Teams be established, to run for periods of 1-2 years each, to generate and foster within the ACT Schools community an increased awareness of, and skills in, art curriculum development, and in particular the preparation of guidelines, contexts and programs for art teaching.

Comment:

There is an urgent need to generate aims and purposes which are relevant to the ACT situation, and which have been developed by teachers from within the system (while at the same time drawing on the best current theory and practice being developed elsewhere in Australia, and overseas). This recommendation has the added advantage, if it is to be regarded s a cyclic one with teams forming and disbanding over a period of 5-10 years, in helping to meet the situation covered in the recommendations on increasing employment opportunities. (The Victorian Education Department "Secondary Art/Craft Curriculum Project" which produced "Praxis" and the support units "Drawing", "Painting", "Printmaking", "Ceramics", and "Photography" could be an appropriate model for such an initiative.)

2.22 It is recommended that a broadly representative Art Subject Committee be established to include practising teachers, subject consultants, and tertiary art education and National Art Gallery representatives. The general aim of the Committee would be to oversee the development of art education in ACT schools.

Comment:

The detailed description of the roles and responsibilities of this committee would best be developed by the members of the committee themselves. A number of successful models for this approach can be found in the various states.

2.23 It is recommended that groups of teachers (e.g. 3-4 per group) be seconded from schools as roving subject consultants on a full or part time basis, for periods of 1-2 years to assist the present full time consultant.

Comment:

The adoption of this recommendation would have a number of benefits. The schools would gain greatly from the flow of

ideas and interactions stimulated by the consultants. The teacher/consultants would have the opportunity to gain a broader awareness of a range of approaches and practices that cannot be gained in other ways such as inservice education programs, or subject association meetings. Such a scheme would have a highly beneficial effect on the morale of teachers in schools through the mutual support, encouragement and increased expertise which would be developed. Again, there would be a beneficial side-effect from the creation of increased employment opportunities.

2.24 It is recommended that the ACT Schools Authority and individual schools initiate an examination of the relevance and need to maintain the division between industrial arts and art taught in schools.

Comment:

It can be argued that the artificial division between these two subjects is based more on an accident of history than on any coherent analysis of the relationship in theory and practice between art, craft, creativity, and design. Many opportunities are currently being missed for the productive integration of art, craft and design activities in schools.

2.3 Professional Development Recommendations

2.31 It is recommended that the ACT Schools Authority and schools investigate ways of improving the status and morale of high school art teachers in the ACT.

Comment:

This recommendation should also be considered in relation to the recommendations made on Employment Conditions and Opportunities. Suggested approaches could include the development of increased consultancy services, curriculum development project teams and "tagged" art co-ordinators positions (see 2.21, 2.23, 2.14).

Consideration could also be given to the provision of full or part time study leave to enable art teachers to acquire appropriate curriculum and administrative qualifications.

2.32 It is recommended that increased opportunities be provided for art teachers to visit other schools in the ACT and other systems in other states, to stimulate further professional development.

2.33 It is further recommended that opportunities be provided to bring in experienced and dynamic teachers on a regular basis from other schools and systems to work in the classroom and schools, and to conduct workshops in response to the expressed needs of the schools concerned.

Comment:

It is important that relatively isolated teachers working in a highly compacted and rigid system, without the stimulus of a large dynamic faculty, are given opportunities to examine and explore a variety of approaches to art teaching. It is also essential that teachers are not led to believe that there is only one way to teach, or that there have been no developments in the field of art or art teaching since their initial training.

2.34 It is recommended that further opportunities be provided for teachers to develop their professional expertise, particularly in the areas of course and program planning, through in-service programs and other related activities.

Comment:

To enable this to operate more effectively than at present it may be necessary to improve the arrangements currently made to cover staff absences for this purpose. There can be a particular problem in this regard where art faculties are very small which can prevent teachers attending courses together.

2.4 Parent and Community Awareness

2.41 It is recommended that the ACT Schools Authority, together with individual schools or groups of schools, investigate means of increasing the awareness of parents and members of the broader community of the role and value of art in education.

Comment:

A variety of methods could be employed to achieve this. The series of exhibitions conducted at the school, regional and state level under the title "Education Involves Art" conducted in Victoria is one approach that could be examined. It is very important that, in a situation where comprehensive art programs for all students are not generally available, parents and members of the community are given an insight into what is possible in art education, given adequate staffing levels, time allocation, leadership, and so on.

ENGLISH

1. Introduction

This report is prepared on the basis of information gathered from visits to four schools, considered to be representative of the range of teaching and curriculum practices in English in schools in the ACT; on information gathered in discussion with other consultants who had opportunities to observe and discuss English teaching in a number of other high schools; on the basis of discussion with advisory staff; on the basis of informal discussions with members of the English Teachers Association; on the basis of documents made available by the ACT Schools Authority and the individual schools visited.

Cross checking impressions with people outside the schools, advisers, other consultants and administrators suggests that the impressions gained and conclusions reached about the "state of the art" of English teaching have a certain validity.

The issues and constraints observed and raised by teachers and Seniors/heads of departments suggest that some changes to the nature of the curriculum support and school based implementation practice for English are needed although from discussion, the suggestions apply as well to other subject areas.

Comment on the state of Drama in the high schools has also been made. In addition, because their work impinges on the work of the English departments in most schools, comment has been made on the Resource Teachers' role. The resource teacher model is one which is considered to offer much to this system because of its specific focus within a school based model of curriculum development and policy formulation.

2. Overview

The high school system in the ACT has the potential for ensuring flexible and challenging school based curriculum developments. The range of levels from 7-10 allows for the possibility of interesting transition courses between the primary school and th colleges. The colleges seem to expect that students begin Year 11 with a broad educational background and a confidence and competence in reading and writing skills. The general impression is that the colleges do not expect that the high schools teach specifically for college work. Yet some high schools seem to look backwards as they plan their programmes, teaching specifically at Year 10 for college work. There is a contradiction in expectations and practice which seems to need discussion and resolution. Their (the colleges) expectations of receiving confident and reasonably competent students would suggest that the high schools could create some challenging English Language and Literature courses.

The high schools ought therefore to be able to create opportunities for students to leave school to enter colleges or the work force with a broad experience of language in use in society - through books, newspapers, the other media, video,

TV, film, computers, drama and so on and with a confidence in themselves as language users. A broad notion of literacy for today and the future should inform their curriculum: a notion of literacy which includes print literacy, aural and visual literacy and computer literacy for the changes in information technology.

Given the potential freedom from pressures from above and the absence of a Year 10 examination and the flexibility of a school assessed Year 10 certificate, the generally conservative, traditional, safe and even bland approach to the teaching of English which is encountered in some schools is surprising. This is not so for all schools; some indeed showed evidence of considerable effort in creating courses which allowed for a range of student needs, for integrating the many components of English and for allowing students some choice in the paths they take in English.

While English teaching as observed can be characterised as generally safe, and conservative and indeed solid, there are some skilled and creative teachers working in all the schools visited. What is most noticeable is that the individual strengths of these teachers are for the most part untapped: untapped primarily because English faculties (with exceptions) show little evidence of a corporate or collective purpose and policy for the development and implementation and ongoing review of curriculum. It is important for it to be understood that this statement does not hold generally - one school in particular indicated a degree of whole staff commitment to curriculum planning and decision-making which reflected not only individual talents, but also the keen leadership of a Senior who encourages the professional commitment of the staff.

In all schools, there is evidence of some new or changed approach to aspects of English. However, these appear to be peripheral changes rather than changes which might affect the entire English programme. Mostly they are changes initiated by an individual teacher with some slight chance that the change might be picked up by someone else on the staff. Change and innovation tends therefore to be individualised rather than part of a whole staff process in which English teaching can be reformulated and considered.

Teachers are, however, clearly concerned and committed to their students - this professional concern is noticeable in all schools. It is to be commended and fostered. Systems support, internal and external, should be available so that such concern in practice can be enhanced by beliefs and theory being articulated and shared and coherent English programmes being thus reformulated.

The quite conservative nature of the curricula, documented and in practice is revealed by the lack of common acceptance in practice, of more recent approaches to aspects of English language development and learning (e.g. little evidence of the acceptance in practice or indeed in documents of the notion writing as a process not a product was seen). Language Arts

programmes in the primary schools are, however, apparently being developed on the basis of the latest research and theories about reading and writing and language development. The coherent link between the Language Arts of the primary schools and the programmes of the colleges needs to be made and supported. It appears that English of the high school system despite the efforts of some individual teachers is the least challenging of all three levels of schooling.

There is little talking or sharing in evidence between the different levels of schooling - this is partly a function of the staffing arrangements (the difficulty that teachers find in moving between the high schools and the colleges), the lack of movement between schools and the lack of a corporate effort within individual school English faculties. Any connections made with colleges of primary schools are informal and infrequent or else made by the Resource teachers. In one school, the Resource teachers are powerful and effective liaison between feeder primary schools and the high schools, particularly with regard to children at risk (in reading, writing, numeracy, etc).

There is scope for an unlocking of the traditional modes of English teaching in the 7-10 high school system - few schools are taking advantage or feel able to take advantage of the freedom to change and build curricula more appropriate to the needs of today's children. Some are moving in that direction - their work shows potential which needs to be supported, not only centrally, but also through the professional strength and leadership of the Band 2 teachers - whose role needs restating with an emphasis on the leadership role which is a necessity in school based curriculum decision-making and in teacher professional development.

3. Documentation

There is a notable lack of congruence between the documents, statements of curriculum intent and observed classroom practice. Documents of registered curricula were inadequate. They are in many schools, out of date, and an inadequate reflection even of some of the more exciting aspects of curriculum practice in the schools.

While most statements list aims in terms of reading, writing and speaking and listening skills, there is little evidence of articulation of underlying philosophies for the teaching of English or of current theories and approaches to language development. In one school only, is a rationale for the total programme and for the sequencing between year levels clearly and comprehensively stated.

Documentation is seen generally as a paper task only. In only one school visited is it clear that the process of reviewing and constructing an English curriculum for the students of all abilities in Years 7-10, is seen as a commitment to reflecting classroom practice and in fact allowing for change. In the other schools, the curriculum statement is seen as a product

alone, which when written need bear only slight resemblance to the individual practices and methodologies of the individual classroom teachers.

Three schools are in the process of rewriting their statements. One school is constructing its statement for initial approval. The English faculty in this school is working, with the strong leadership of the Band 2, as a group to construct a viable, coherent and flexibly sequenced course. In this case, documentation clearly reflected classroom practice, the staff taking a most professional attitude to the curriculum planning process. One school, constrained by the lack of a permanent Band 2, is teaching within the frameworks of a curriculum designed by the previous Band 2, more than three years ago. The fact that the English programme is lively and apparently challenging for all students, no matter what ability, is a reflection of the sound and flexible way the programme was originally organised (to maximise student choice, to ensure appropriate distribution of books and resources, to maximise sharing between teachers of ideas and resources and approaches, and to allow for sequencing between year levels without dictating activities and approaches). In this school, however, the need for a permanent Band 2 is felt, in order to support new directions and the review of the current offerings in the English programme.

In most schools, the difficulties of arranging time for the entire English staff to meet in order to plan were expressed. In one school, the Band 2 only made some changes to the original statment. In another, the Band 2 is attempting to review curricula one year level at time, rather than as a whole. Staff generally tend to see the review process as a paper exercise not as a practical one with implications for their own classroom practice. One set of English guidelines is no more than a list of topics and checklist items to which teachers should pay attention: Clear articulation of sequence, order, and coherence in aims and activities from Years 7-10 is not stated in the programme document.

Most documents state broadly the aims of English. They, with exceptions, tend not to articulate the wider dimensions of English teaching nor of language and literacy for a changing society. Thus, for example, Media appears as a topic for study somewhere in most documents - that is as a study of radio, TV and newspapers - but the notion of Media as an aspect of language integral to the literacies students will need for today and tomorrow is not being woven into the fabric of the English programme. The point is, that rather than the Media being simply a topic for study, it also needs to be given a philosophical perspective within the world of English curriculum and teaching practice. Similarly, new technology, videos and microcomputers should be discussed by English teachers and their role in language and literacy learning should be considered (for example, the impact of word processing and the writing process). This is used as an example only. It is not suggested that in other states the broader notions of literacy and language have reached school

practice. However, these are dimensions of language and literacy which are creating debate and provoking a reworking of the purposes and philosophies of English.

Such debate and reconsidering of the role of the English teacher and of English in relation to the rest of the curriculum is vital in our schools. Little of this was seen in the ACT.

Schools need to be supported by curriculum guidelines which are not prescriptive, but which provoke rethinking of issues and concerns in English. Such guidelines or discussion papers would enable a common discussion of beliefs and practices in areas such as Assessment in English, the role of the media, broader notions of literacy for the future, the place of literature, oral language and so on.

Such discussion and sharing among teachers within school faculties and between teachers in different schools is not evident.

Where such discussion seems to occur, it is under the auspices of the local English teachers' association. The influence of the ideas and discussion generated through the association is noticeable in those schools where there are active members of the association.

However, it cannot be left to the local teachers' association alone to support school based curriculum development. The English consultant needs systems support to generate common discussion of the issues in English teaching so that school based curriculum development has signposts for ongoing review and change in teaching practice.

Teachers should be involved in this discussion process - via standing curriculum committees or project teams, called upon to prepare guidelines or discussion papers. The obvious danger in the small school/education system is that of insularity which can breed conservatism and stagnation in educational ideas and practices.

Teachers in one school observed that they are comfortable with what they are doing and that they feel little need for outside support - they consider themselves quite self-sufficient. That self-satisfaction, it seems, can be justified up to a point. However, when it means that educational practice has scarcely changed and that any accommodation to current or future needs of students is peripheral to a mainstream essentially conservative curriculum (even while safely taught), then the school is doing less than it can to serve students' needs in the 1980s.

The current procedure for registering courses and programmes seems in most schools to be a paper exercise only. The paper submitted can be and in most cases is very different from the reality of practice in the classroom. Nevertheless, several Band 2's are keen to take a lead in the process of curriculum

review but they feel constrained by the lack of in-school time available for total English faculty involvement and by the difficulties of holding after school staff meetings.

If documentation is to be useful and worth more than the paper on which curriculum statements are printed, then alternate procedures must be established to support school based curriculum development and its articulation in curriculum statements.

New procedures such as accreditation panels or review teams from other schools would prompt the sharing of ideas to break down the obvious insularity between schools and one would hope between faculties within a school.

One would also expect that such procedures would make the links between professional development and curriculum development more obvious. The role of the Band 2 teacher as an acknowledged leader in such development must be made and supported.

Statements on assessment in the documents are no more than adequate. Again they do not always reflect practice. Statements on assessment and reporting procedures are brief and generally show little attempt to move beyond traditional modes of assessment. Of course schools are constrained by the general practice of the school. Nevertheless the area of assessment in English, particularly in relation to children's writing has been the subject of considerable work and debate elsewhere in recent years. No evidence of such debate being picked up in practice was seen. In one school only has assessment been given a new direction, with the attempt to provide within the assessment scheme for the needs of students of all abilities. Thus students (particularly the more able) are able to have extension work and wider reading taken into account.

There is a need for common discussion of issues concerning assessment in English. There is also a need for discussion and sharing of ideas and practices for reporting to parents. Some English faculties are making moves to inform parents more specifically about English programmes and student's language development but the moves are at best tentative. Reporting to parents and informing them about the schools' approaches to reading and writing, to "grammar" and the teaching of the conventions of language use is vital. English teachers, because they have a specific responsibility for languge and literacy, are vulnerable to community opinion. System wide discussion of assessment and ways of informing and communicating with parents is clearly necessary.

Summary

- Curriculum statements generally are not comprehensive.
- They do not offer a substantial statement of philosophy and underlying theory to support teaching practice. (One

school is clearly an exception in this.) Such statements as are made need to be the result of staff discussion and deliberation.

- The documents tend to outline programmes which are generally traditional in their orientation to language and literacy. There are hints of innovations. In documents and in practice these tend to be handled piecemeal rather than within a total framework for planning and structuring English 7-10.

- The "paper exercise" quality of the documentation reflects what appears to be an ad hoc process of planning English, and of sequencing and constructing a coherent school programme for English Language and Literacy.

- The Band 2 teachers take responsibility for producing the document and seem often to find it difficult to involve the entire staff in the process. Sharing of ideas or response to planning a total school programme is in some schools informal and incidental to individual day to day classroom practice.

- There is a need for support for corporate discussion and planning - within each school and across the ACT schools.

- There is a need to resolve the relationship between English taught in colleges and the high schools. Expectations at both levels need to be articulated and shared.

- The process of curriculum design and development should be an opportunity for teacher professional development. At the moment it is not in most schools. Where school based curriculum and teacher development are being linked, further support is needed. Where it is not, some central guidelines for curriculum review and planning should be made available.

4. Curriculum in Practice

English staff are well qualified and tend to be very experienced. Many have been in their current school for more than four years. There is a stability in English staffing, which, because staff know each other well and seem to cooperate readily (share teaching in some schools, sharing resources, etc) can be both advantageous and disadvantageous. Informal sharing of ideas and materials frequently occurs in most schools. However, a sense of being sure and comfortable also exists and the need for input and of something to prompt teacher involvement generally in curriculum development was expressed by most senior staff.

English faculties tend, like so many other faculties to be self contained within the schools. Communication between the other faculties (apart from History or Social Science in which most English teachers also teach) appears to be slight.

The opportunity which the high school system affords in terms of developing challenging and different curricula which cut across subject barriers is not being grasped.

In schools where the Resource teacher model is being established or (as in one school has been established successfully) there is some reaching across subject areas so that language development can become the concern of all teachers. As noted later, the Resource teachers seem to be an important element in the bridging of the gap between faculties across the school.

Teachers show a real concern for their students. The nurturing role was very evident in most schools.

Most schools had workable programmes for helping children at risk - some are still establishing a resource teacher model which will support their work most effectively. Reading programmes and individualised attention for specific children were given a high priority in most schools.

Only in one school was specific attention being given to accommodating children with special gifts and talents. Extension work and ways of individualising English for children of high ability needs greater attention.

One feels that the safe, sure approach generally taken does not support or challenge many of the students.

In this regard, it was noted that grouping by ability is the policy in only one school, for years 7-10. In three of the schools, students are grouped in Year 10 only. In only one school is there a policy for retaining mixed grouping throughout the school.

In one school, grouping is necessitated by the position English occupies on the timetable line with maths. The maths faculty groups by ability and this dictates English groups: clearly a less than desirable situation. Mixed ability grouping is thus generally accepted in Years 7-9 with one exception. No clear rationale in terms of language learning theory was offered for the need to group by ability in Year 10 in three of the schools. Again, there is a need to articulate the relationship between the colleges and the high schools and the expectations of both, in order that the high schools can articulate a position on the validity of mixed ability versus ability grouped teaching.

The issue deserves a wide hearing and should be considered in light of what is known about the way children learn language and use it in different situations, with different participants for different purposes.

An English programme should be able to accommodate mixed ability grouping and ought not need to resort to the constraining situation of streaming for Language teaching and learning. That being said, it is also appropriate to suggest

the value of the Resource teacher model in schools to support not only English teachers but other teachers as well in catering for children with specific needs within the framework of a mixed ability situation.

Curriculum in practice in the classroom is still the prerogative of individual teachers, as it should be. However, as has been noted above the vagueness of the whole English programme in some schools is reflected in the vagueness of some of the teaching - a concern expressed by some of the Band 2 teachers.

The need for common focus on main issues and aspects of English is necessary, while allowing for individual teachers' strengths and interests in the classroom.

Schools need to consider ways of framing their curriculum in practice so that the components of English are covered with each classroom programme, at each year level and thus within the total programme for the school. In the subject English, in the absence of a set and sequenced curriculum, one has to rely on the individual teacher to keep in mind all aspects of language and literacy development and to integrate those into the programme he or she is teaching.

It becomes all the more important then that English faculties share and work within a common perspective about the components of English and where these fit into ary programme.

Two schools had different but nevertheless clearly stated and coherent ways of ensuring that at each year level and then through the school from 7-10, those aspects the faculty agreed were part of any child's language development were catered for.

Two schools had less explicit outlines for sequencing and for ensuring that individual teachers covered the essential components of English.

Once more, it is suggested that central guidelines which will help English faculties to frame their total curriculum - not in a uniform manner but rather allowing for individual school needs - should be made available to support school curriculum development.

In all schools there are some current changes occurring in curriculum practice. Some of these are exciting and have the potential to renew the challenge of English teaching for teachers and students. Yet, they seem to be generally peripheral to a total review and reformulation of the English programme - except in one instance. Some of the changes which deserve support and indeed extension, include the following:

a) introduction of either mini-units of work or semester units of work on different topics, which opens up student choice for learning.

b) use of Resource teachers so that shared teaching and work with different groups of students can go on in the classroom.

c) use of Resource teachers and Librarians for alternate reading programmes.

d) teachers reading class novels onto tapes for use by students who need help reading and who can thus listen to a book while reading it in their own time.

e) introduction of workshops on the writing process and moves to bring current approaches to the writing process into daily classroom practice.

f) introduction of work with video cameras.

g) introduction of statements for students and parents about expectations and activities in each year level - so that parents are better informed about what their children are doing.

h) introduction of student self assessment and reporting sheets so that teachers and students keep records of what students have learned and mastered - descriptive reporting.

i) a focus on Oral Language - Listening and Speaking - not only within the English faculty but across the school.

j) regular meetings with English staff in the colleges for shared moderation of student work as a catalyst for discussion of expectations and curriculum practices.

k) alternate methods of assessing students, to enable all students to extend themselves and be credited with wider reading or extra work.

l) alternate methods of organising the components of the English programme so that books, resources and materials are allocated to different year levels - that is to allow for sequencing without being prescriptive and while providing for increased student choice.

m) the extension of Drama into the English programme. (Drama is a much neglected subject in schools - there are few specialist Drama teachers and most English teachers do not feel confident to use drama in English.) Drama facilities are also poor and English staff have had to "make do" with small rooms off the gym or spare rooms which need much work to make them suitable for teaching.

n) liaison between teachers at primary school and Year 7 level, so that 6-7 transition can be supported.

o) a Year 7 course which coordinates Social Science and English/Language Arts work as a bridge between primary and secondary school.

p) a Year 7 course which focusses on communications as a way of integrating English/Language work in the transition year.

q) the enthusiasm of some teachers who take part in subject associations or inservice activities.

There are positive aspects of English teaching. They are however, often isolated activities within the English programme when they should be integrated in such a way that the whole programme can change as a result of the innovation.

The following practices reflect inadequacies in the English programmes in the schools (they are not in priority order):

a) the lack of Media studies in some schools and the traditional approach to Media in others.

b) the lack of Drama in most schools.

c) the continued practice of using grammatical drill and exercise in some schools instead of writing for real purposes (the teaching of "grammar" can be a dramatic and vital component of any English programme - but it must be lifted from the category of worksheet dummy run activity).

d) the generally traditional approach to student writing - i.e. the lack of evidence that current composing/writing process theory and classroom research had infiltrated individual teacher practice so that there is an emphasis on revealing the writing/revising/drafting and final publishing process to students.

e) a general tendency to use teacher talk as the vehicle for classroom work.

f) the lack of justification and a rationale for streaming at Year 10.

g) the lack of involvement of many teachers in inservice activities (partly a function of the difficulty teachers have in gaining release from school).

h) the fact that schools do not use the services of the consultant (the consultant is not invited into some schools).

i) the lack of central curriculum guidelines to prompt ongoing curriculum review and consideration of issues in English.

j) the fact that there is little occasion for sharing of ideas and practices across the system.

k) the lack of debate within faculties and between schools about new theories or approaches to English.

Summary and Recommendations

It should be clear from this report that English in the ACT high schools is not a cause for despair: nor is there cause for jubilation. There are some energetic and very committed teachers. There are some interesting and challenging innovations and possibililties for change in course offerings and in English curriculum and organisation. However, it should also be clear that these tend to operate as peripheral to day to day, general curriculum practice, which tends to reflect a rather safe and comfortable approach to the teaching of English language and literacy.

School based curriculum development demands a focussing of teacher thought and energies so that common beliefs and theories about language teaching and development and about the acquisition of literacy skills for present and future society can underpin classroom practice. There are a number of constraints operating to prevent that focussing of thought and energies; including time, the need for reassertion of the leadership role of the Band 2 teacher, the need for curriculum guidelines and for central support for ongoing discussion of emerging issues in English teaching and language development.

In short, while the teaching of English is sound in general, it lacks the challenge and vigour which one might expect should be integral to learning and teaching in what is arguably the most vital area of the school curriculum - language development and literacy.

In a small education system, where stability in staffing is both an advantage and a disadvantage, there is need to find ways in which the energy of teaching commitment and curriculum development is encouraged and extended. What is clear is that schools are likely to become insular in their approaches to their subjects and that teachers without the ideas emerging from shared discussion of issues can continue to teach comfortably and maintain safe standards, yet in the process they can cease to respond to students needs or even to challenge and extend students as much as they can be extended.

The following recommendations are oriented to these concerns.

1. That the school based curriculum process be supported in a number of ways by the ACT Schools Authority.

These may include:

1.1 The establishment of a standing curriculum committee, made up of representatives of English faculties.

The curriculum committee may include a number of sub-committees or project teams who work on key issues which arise from time to time, e.g. Assessment in English; Assessment and evaluation of student writing; Adolescent Fiction and wider reading; Book selection; Language and Learning; The Role of Media in the

English curriculum; Computers and the English teacher; Literacy for the 21st century - what are the needs? These are examples only.

Teachers and Band 2 teachers need to be involved in these committees. The purpose would be to provide teachers with an opportunity for sharing of concerns, for production of curriculum guidelines, for dissemination of relevant current research and ideas in English, to support the consultant in inservice work, and so on.

1.2 The establishment of project teams when needed to attend to production of curriculum materials or support materials from time to time in response to schools needs.

1.3 The publication of guidelines for curriculum planning and organisation. These do not have to be and should not be representative but should reflect a coherent philosophy and approach to the teaching of English.

1.4 The writing and distribution of discussion/position papers on aspects of English.

2. Support for teacher release for inservice seminars and conferences.

3. Reorganisation of the curriculum review process. The appointment of accreditation panels to enable sharing across schools of curriculum planning processes.

4. Support for the restating and clarifying of the Band 2 teachers' role in teacher development and curriculum development. Support for the professional development of the Band 2 teacher.

5. Extension of the role of the Resource teachers, in the general area of Language and Learning as well as in the area of catering for children with specific needs.

6. Provision of specialist teachers in Drama.

7. Provision of adequate facilities and resources for Drama - both as a specialist subject and as a vital aspect of learning across the curriculum.

8. Reconsideration of the role of Media and New Technology in English language teaching and learning. This should include an emphasis on the word processing and text editing function available to students through using computers.

9. Support for ongoing liaison between primary schools and colleges. Such discussion to include clarification of aims and expectations for English language and literacy development.

10. Increased flexibility in staffing allocations between colleges and high schools, to enable staff movement between the two systems.

HISTORY

The planning, organisation and teaching of History in the sample schools are of a generally high standard. Of the four departments (and all are of sufficient size to warrant a senior teacher) two could be regarded as progressive, one was a tidy blend of the traditional and innovative and the other, while fairly traditional, was still attractive to students. It is assumed that other departments throughout the ACT would reflect a similar kind of pattern, though it is conceivable that traditional and possibly low-interest ratings might attach to some faculties in those schools not involved in the review.

The reasons for apparent stability can be traced to:

1. History's secure position in Year 7 even though experience in that year can be limited to a 10 week pressurised course emphasising the basics of historical study.

2. The offering of core plus elective units in 8, 9 and 10 or modularly in 9/10.

3. The fact that teaching is largely by specialists. In one school there was complete specialisation, in two English and History staff combined in a common staff-room atmosphere of close liaison, while in the last, a Humanities faculty, specialist experience has been progressively introduced to ensure balanced components of English and History as well as Geography and Social Studies. Integration in the last is an emerging strength.

4. Teachers' willingness to participate and share in resource preparation and course design. (Some enthusiasm is seen as competition against other subject offerings, not altogether a healthy practice but one that is typical of the survival syndrome that marks smaller faculty belonging in a small education system.

5. Societal expectation of History's place as a "reliable" sequence of study and one that, in parents' views, may constitute a disciplined learning experience.

   In the ACT this attitude is enhanced by closer identification with government, Australian history and "nationalism", the opportunity for global-type contact and, over a decade, the rapidity of socio-economic change especially as it has affected so many homes and children. Combined, these have tended to perpetuate History's cloak of respectability. The indeterminate nature of future change also provides a rationale for acceptability.

Though the following are differentials, they are qualities in high school History as observed.

1. Definition of history as subject, study, discipline and experience.

2. The archaeological bases of historical study.

3. The tools of historical research - primary, secondary (tertiary sources also could be considered).

4. An emphasis upon skills as well as content per se.

5. The breadth of resources, not only texts (which pleasingly, are not over-emphasised and which for some courses do not exist in any case) but also library hardware and software and kits of teachers' own making.

6. A minimum of "trendy" courses but, in their place, sufficient to cater for sustained interest among the less able, imaginative reconstruction of the past and various relevant activities to enliven the study of history.

7. No undue emphasis upon projects and mechanical regurgitation of encyclopaedia material.

On the other hand, there is room for improvement in some areas, not all equally applicable to the four schools and therefore listed as a basis for a professional sharing of ideas.

1. Some programs do not reflect the depth of approaches, nor variety of teaching techniques that might be applied to units of study within them. Thus what occurs in the classroom may be quite different from what was intended. Better is the kind of program that lists content and themes together with suggested depth of treatment expressed as a time factor, skills to be emphasised, teaching methods that might be used, activities believed to be relevant and resources (in-school and out of it) that might be tapped. A useful adjunct would be variations appropriate to lower ability levels.

2. Documentation is regarded as invaluable for a number of reasons not the least of which is accountability. But documentation can serve a variety of purposes. Explanations as to how teachers can provide for group work within the classroom, organise excursions, set about examining local history, team teach certain topics, collaborate in assessment practices and so on are part of the responsibility of the senior teacher. While individual teachers do maintain their own records and while in a small faculty interpersonal liaison is practicable, some form of centralised evaluation of course pursuits appears to be necessary as a starting point for moderation of courses, changes in direction and the creation of new courses. This is not suggested as a form of supervision of teacher practice but rather as one means of co-ordinating teacher effort. Others might include pre-arranged visits to classes which in a system that encourages professionalism should be not only possible but a natural consequence of rights and freedom.

3. There is a distinct risk of teaching styles becoming stereotyped. It is within the grasp of History faculties to ensure that this does not occur and probably the chance of its occurring is minimal. Yet frequent variation in allocation to core and interest courses should occur. The enthusiast in one area having developed and taught and evaluated a unit to a point of personal satisfaction should not stay with a course beyond that point. It is of course recognised and accepted readily that senior teachers must look to a minimising of individual teacher or corporate faculty effort in a subject like History where core classes can be large and the burden of correction and individual pupil direction (that is, in mixed ability classes) very high.

4. There is need for a continuing search for assessment devices that are appropriate to the subject, History. Measuring knowledge of content is only one way to assessment of the skills of investigation and communication. For example, one of the skills to be taught is where and how to look for a specific sequence of events or a biography and what to do with the material once located. Notemaking is of critical importance as are sifting of evidence, interpreting it, expressing it without bias and so on. These kinds of things that constitute the methodology of history must be examined in the broad sense and the student's confidence with them evaluated. Therein lies the measure of a teacher's success without which any learning/ teaching process becomes stultified.

5. Related to 4. is the role of the library. While librarians all praise history staffs for the liaison that exists, there appears to be a need for longerterm planning that seeks to condition students to library (school and other) use as part of a disciplined approach and to stronger demand upon library and other resources especially when finance for their expansion, updating and consolidation may soon be at a premium. The last point is critical as schools move into a greater dependence upon media usage and audiovisual material.

6. There needs to be some attention given to other subject specialist areas and to the contribution all other faculties can bring to History and vice versa. The link with language development, reading and oral expression are obvious but not so the contributions that can be made by and to Music, Art, Home Science and so on. It is realised that this ideal is hard to attain organisationally especially as a school shrinks in size. One solution is through more broadly integrable curriculum areas, another through flexible room or space use another through deliberate dezoning of faculty "territories". Yet another lies in cultivating latent staff expertise in other subject interest areas or, in advertising for new staff to ensure a breadth of knowledge that can not only assist History's own breadth but break down the worst aspects of subject territorialism. At present the teacher librarian carries

too heavy a burden in the collation of appropriately related resources. Where he/she cannot cope, the breadth is not realised.

7. History cannot afford to ignore the multi-disciplinary advantages of its being. Nor can it ignore the present total curriculum emphases that are emanating from K - 12 thinking. It is desirable therefore that liaison occurs with Primary teachers in terms of earlier learning experiences and that further liaison occurs with the College recipients of its students. Though the pursuits might express horror, it seems relevant to stress that K - 12 interchange be encouraged within the total "Humanities" framework.

8. Three Australian content areas require development. The first is Aboriginal Studies. It appears that attention is being given only to the place of Aboroginals at the time of white contact in Australia and as one minor discussion area amongst contemporary issues. The second is Australia's multi-culturalism which will play an increasingly significant role in internal and possibly external affairs. The third is local history and Australiana which is examined in varying depths in Years 7-10 but not as part of a spiral effect. Linked with this is the need to see local history in its changing dimensions - pre the ACT's creation, the ACT as a concept, as a reality and since. The three facets are mentioned because of their value to the skill of prediction which arises from the investigation of previous patterns of cause and effect.

9. Finally, care needs to be given to the predictable performance of students in accordance with their gauged ability. One must wonder at the lack of provision for the talented student of history, which could well be through more taxing assignments. Nor is interest through election of as much History as possible the criterion of excellence or above average ability. The less able students can be just as enamoured of the subject. Schools therefore should look to individualisation of teaching strategies, the advantages in mixed ability classes of peer teaching, group leadership and group roles, and assessment practices oriented accordingly towards individual achievement at a realistic level of expectation.

The preceding list is not exhaustive. To go further would be to generalise dangerously and, in any case, not all of the above are applicable to each of the sample schools.

The following observations may be beyond the brief but might be interpreted in terms of History within the ACT schools system rather than History as a part of any one school's curriculum.

In a system where autonomy has been encouraged, professional freedom guaranteed, constraints of "system requirements" removed and terms like teacher self-determination, choice and diversity have real meaning, there are, nevertheless, real risks to such ideals.

1. There is an inherent fear amongst high school history teachers, not freely admitted, of stagnation for a number of reasons:
   (a) lack of mobility between schools, between high school and college;
   (b) the exhausting of inventiveness and its replacement by innovation which can lead to a deskilling of teachers and teaching ultimately;
   (c) mobility to draw in young enthusiasts to what will be an aging teaching force;
   (d) a return to the "tired and trusted" for a subject that demands changing strategies.

2. Parallel to the above is the growth in subject separatism as faculties like History strive territorially to survive in a reality of declining enrolments.

3. Wastage of effort is paramount. History demands a miscellany of resources constantly changing, constantly requiring upgrading and updating. To this task teachers are addressing themselves to the point of observable exhaustion in some cases. The risk is that frustration and the time-honoured "easy way out" will take its place.

4. Organisational problems of some schools, moreso as enrolments decrease, will prevent the realisation of correct sequencing. In History a measure of this is critical. In other words "smorgasbord" interest electives will not provide a sufficient background for college or tertiary study.

5. The stress upon "non-prescriptive curriculum guidelines" (Draft Document 3.3.83) relating to Primary schooling and the purposeful but, as far as High School courses of study are concerned, unrelated College courses, places the onus squarely upon High Schools to be more vigorous in their teaching and more attentive to the disciplinary nature of the content and essential skills of their curricula. There is a risk to this observed necessity. Not only in the watering down of courses through the very freedom that should be sustaining them, not only through integrated studies which should be a phenomenon of secondary schooling but also through the pressure upon high school teachers and the obvious conflict between their satisfying professional self-esteem and tight and, in the future, diminishing financial and staffing resources. The results of this could well be apathy, lack of dynamism and a reliance upon turotial techniques rather than the hard-core teaching that is essential as preparation for College or for those learning to go into the workforce.

Solutions may be found in the following for some of the above.

1. A clearer delineation of duties of the Senior Teacher with some inbuilt expectation of his/her co-ordinating, supervisory and course evaluation functions.

2. A more definitive role for the Assistant Principal (Curriculum) that ensures genuine co-ordination of faculty interests, positive liaison between faculties and a positive total curriculum function for curriculum committees. They should be key people in the school's total curriculum committees.

3. A deliberate across-faculty role for Master Teachers for at least part of their time. These people are skilled as teachers in the broadest sense and should not be seen solely as super subject specialists. They have or should have the capacity for examining teaching strategies in all subjects and, in collaboration with Senior Teachers, relating subject purpose and content to method: they are seen as a total school resource for total school teaching effectiveness.

4. As investigation of needs as teachers, and senior teachers see them carried out by the Authority. From this, known practitioners with skill in a particular area should be withdrawn as consultants but only for the period of time they predict as necessary for meeting an expressed need. The rotating of quality teachers in this way could be more effective and, it is felt, more effective than one person's or an outsider's (ANU, CAE, College) view of what inservice should occur.

5. An examination of accommodation in relation to enrolment patterns and rationalisation of enrolments as a result. The "neighbourhood" school idea needs to be challenged as does the undue amount of pupil mobility that occurs between some schools. Falling enrolments provide the opportunity for a close look at desirable populations for every school. The fact that teaching styles must change with technological change and that effective teaching in many subjects, including History and English, demands flexible spaces, provides sufficient rationalisation for doubting parents. The conversion to open planning as it has been conceived for one school visited is not favoured. It does not work except in rare cases of teacher compatibility. Instead an emphasis could be given to a "decompartmentalising" of teaching as spaces in schools become available. There are problems not the least of which would be faculty expectation. The answer to this is that, whatever the space it must remain a flexible one for multi-purpose use. Determining its multipurpose nature is one for the whole staff or a truly representative committee.

Further Comments

1. I feel that any observers or critics must be very cautious about applying external criteria to the ACT high schools. One obvious point is the nature of the ACT system and the particular student needs and parental aspirations it must cater for. Thus change phenomena related to the whims or planned strategies of governments, to the public service, and to military personnel must be allowed for. Again, the NCDC's

plans for expansion and consolidation of further settlement, the increasingly complex pattern of life-styles and the very unbalanced nature of industry and the Territory's economy generally all point to the need for the ACT Schools Authority to have a strong say in future planning especially new schools and what will happen to those with declining enrolments. In this context, there should be a playing down of the fact that all schools need to be neighbourhood schools, that they should be of comparable size and tnat they shouldn't specialise in a very deliberate way. I believe there is a place for example, for a smaller agricultural high school, perhaps one that specialises in drama, in art and in homecraft (not only home science but furniture making, interior design, landscaping as well). There appears to be real scope in the ACT to establish schools to meet future needs. (I suppose the same principle of specialist roles could apply to the colleges also, so that some become more truly transitional education centred.) North and South Canberra could produce some duplication to special emphasis schools.

2. Schools already vary considerably philosophically though that difference appears to stem more from management principles, than from major differences in curriculum aims and objectives. Essentially all schools are playing a very strong and worthy welfare role reflective of the type of social background or pecularities on which each school draws. Because the differences are more apparent than real, I found disturbing the rivalry between schools, a rivalry that is fed by gossip, by the scope given to mobility between schools, by the inadequacy of some school boards as opposed to the strength of others (or is it complaint versus vocal?). The statement about high schools, issued as a central prospectus, needs a great deal more strength as a statement. It needs to be far more supportive of the overall strength of all schools and mention minor differences as additional information. The latter does not warrant featuring. Individual school prospectuses, I was glad to observe, are not spectacular "glossies" such as have become a recent fad in some NSW schools.

This point need not conflict with that made under 1. above in that any specialisation is still subservient to the essential core of learning (Communication, Humanities, Maths/Sciences, Languages) and the basic PE, Music, Art and Crafts that would typify every school.

3. The staffing formula appears to need review. Principals appear to enjoy an immense amount of licence in terms of the emphasis they will give to curriculum and therefore to control of staffing mobility. I was struck by the amount of territorialism that characterised at least two of the four schools and the real fear of some of the waning splinter groups, fear that, incidentally didn't produce positive endeavour but rather a collapse of morale and standards of teaching.

Again, therefore, it would seem that some kind of centralist stability needs to be given through the formula to the preservation of curriculum areas. Associated with this is the matter of allocated resources from the centre and from the Principal and/or his finance committee. Some serious anomalies were noticed. I suppose that one unfortunate outcome of the autonomy given to schools is a sort of jealously preserved parochialism in which the centre finds it hard to establish bases for need and comparability, and rumour tends to become fact. It is not as if all within a school seems to know how that school is managed and how it operates. There were some AP's, many subject heads and probably many more assistant teachers who seemed to have lost the art of wanting to know.

Overall, therefore, much more open reporting and mutual exchange of views and approaches appear necessary.

4. A final observation concerning libraries. It has become a matter of habit for me to look in on libraries and I enjoyed doing so during my visit to the ACT.

I found them generally well managed and controlled and well used by class groups during teaching time. Rather typically most concern for libraries as a resource centre was expressed by social science, English and science teachers. Overall use by the rest was not as good. Borrowing rates reflected this as did the absence of sufficient books and AV material in the subject areas least aware of the library's function.

"Thin" areas in terms of resources are in the art, music and craft areas with perhaps too little also in hobbies, sports and leisure interests generally.

Typically also there were signs of favouritism in purchasing for those stock sections were teacher support was apparent - somewhat of a vicious circle!

The atmosphere of libraries was good. I was pleased to see displays, new book sections, daily newspapers and the like, but I would have liked to have seen the library featured much more as a focal point of all manner of school activities.

HOME ECONOMICS

This report is based on visits to four schools for two days each. Nevertheless its conclusions are valid for the Schools Authority High schools as a whole only to the extent to which the schools visited were representative. Interviews were conducted with Principals and senior staff, teachers and students. Observations were made of classrooms and student work.

The Processes of Curriculum Development:

In all home economics departments there was an on-going collaborative approach to curriculum development/evaluation. After whole-faculty discussion and decision making, either the faculty head accepted major responsibility for course writing, or more usually, other faculty members accepted responsibility for some levels or units.

Home economics personnel generally felt able to initiate change at a whole school level either through curriculum committees or directly through the School Board.

Across-class Curriculum Development and Moderation:

Because of the co-operative approach to curriculum, class work tended to be co-ordinated across levels. This was especially the case in home science where weekly ordering was seen as dictating conformity. There was a high degree of across-class organisation with assignments and tests being pre-planned. Moderation tests were usually given at Year 10.

Course and Departmental Evaluation generally proceeded as an integral part of the developmental process described. In one school student and parent evaluation was structured into each unit.

There was evidence that faculty self evaluation was conducted prior to re-accreditation although no validation processes were attempted. Curriculum adjustments were made subsequent to evaluation.

Aims:

Since the Authority and school aims tended to be drawn up in general educational terms they maintained a congruence through their generality. They aimed to develop the attributes (knowledge, and skills and social competencies) necessary for individuals to function autonomously and effectively on leaving high school.

Home economics departments had not explicitly established the relevance of their aims to particular aims of the school and the Schools Authority.

Congruence Between Aims and the Content of the Written Curriculum:

Where aims dealt with technical competencies the aims and objectives were usually consistent. Where aims were concerned with higher level competencies such as independence, creativity and problem solving the relationship to objectives and strategies was less clear.

There was a wide range with respect to the degree to which the written curriculum was well clarified:

Sometimes the course outlines consisted of little more than lists of products or things to be made, and therefore did not show how any sequence of knowledge goals or skills was to be developed. Sometimes the sketchiness of the written curriculum did not do justice to the degree to which the curriculum in use was carefully planned and monitored. Occasionally there was real discrepancy between objectives and the courses topics, for example in the area of food studies with respect to nutrition.

The Curriculum as Delivered:

Again, when the aims were concerned with technical skill, classwork reflected the aims. There was indeed a high level of technical skill achieved. However, where aims were concerned with higher level processes and attributes, there was little congruence and in this respect the subject appeared to be in retreat. This was disappointingly the case with textiles studies where there was heavy concentration on female-oriented clothing construction courses.

The opportunities for creativity, and exploration, and for serious student involvement in decisions that have real consequences, ought to be at least as highly prized as products. Skills (e.g. pattern making, cutting out, joining fabric) can be as easily taught by students designing and making their own fun cushions as by sewing samplers or making set articles.

Most assignments and classwork seen were teacher directed, concentration on imparting information to students. Testing was also information based.

Assessment:

Assessment was generally quoted in broad terms describing a weighting for practical work, assignments and tests. The relationship between particular objectives and the assessment of them was generally not drawn and tended to be difficult to establish. Sometimes some proportion of the assessment seemed to be more related to control than to course objectives, for example in bookwork - as distinct from assignments - or a mark for bringing materials.

How Appropriate is the Curriculum?

Within the school community there was a dichotomy drawn between what was thought to be "academic" and "non-academic" subjects. This produced an over-emphasis on the academic curriculum accompanied by a simplistic and muddled view of the non-academic curriculum. There were several consequences of this:

First, since "academic" appeared to be equated with written work ("theory") the important role of practical experience in conceptualisation was ignored.

Further, there was confusion about the kinds of distinct areas of knowledge and experience provided by subjects employing the productive mode so that curriculum decisions were often made as though practical subjects were variations of the same - art/craft and home economics for example!

Specifically, in some schools there appeared to be a lack of clarity about the purpose of home economics as a life preparation field of study which fits within the C.D.C. area of knowledge and experience (9). Work, leisure and lifestyle (as well as contributing to other areas). As a result, in the A.C.T. home economics is not addressing the question of what range of knowledge and attributes is required in everyday home living in the eighties.

(Perhaps this lack of clarity as to the purpose of home economics underlies the apparent neglect of the area of home and family living from the draft position paper "Future directions in curriculum".)

There is cause for concern about the narrowness of the model of home economics curriculum in terms both of the range of subject matter and of skills. The failure to clarify the purpose of the subject in schools has resulted in a confusion between needs and wants, with wants (or demand) then used as a justification for the constriction of the curriculum.

The Range of Knowledge:

Most contemporary statements about the knowledge base of home economics education specify learning about food, clothing, shelter and human development: the management of the material and human resources of the home. This is true even of the Interim ACT Schools Authority Home Economics Workshop Report (1974). It is therefore surprising to find that home economics has retreated to a concentration on two areas: (1) the selection and preparation of food (with minor components of related food sciences and nutrition) and (2) on clothing construction (with some textile science and other related topics). These areas are taught with an emphasis on technical competence (how to), with the practical work and products as ends in themselves rather than as the means whereby concepts can be acquired, and skills, both technical and intellectual, can be learned.

Broader aspects of home economics such as human development are dealt with in minor ways so that in some cases schools apparently felt obliged to introduce such courses as personal development additional to courses offered by the home economics department.

Processes and Skills:

In Schooling for 15 and 16 year olds the Schools Commissioners argue that the dichotomy between the academic and the non-academic curriculum is counter-productive, and that schools can and should pass on the cultural content (knowledge and skills) in a way that is relevant and useful in practical affairs. They argue that it is important for students to gain practice in perceiving, researching and making decisions about problems and issues which have reality in students' lives.

This is parallel with current thought in home economics education which places emphasis on practical problem solving (rather than technical skills teaching) in the everyday affairs of home and family.

It is also compatible with the C.D.C. statement that schools should include a 'life preparation' element into the core planned around a selection of the requirements of everyday life taught "at the levels of knowledge, understanding and reflective practice rather than low-level skills and techniques".

However, an emphasis in home science and in textiles classes on technical competence and on information (about food and textiles) was found. It is therefore recommended that schools investigate the means whereby they may place the emphasis on principles (such as nutrition[1]) and processes (such as decision making or practical problem solving).

All of the elements are already there - in every school there were examples of activities or assignments which required students to investigate and make decisions from first-hand data (e.g. regulations, foods or fabric tests); to work with the community; to plan a task and order and purchase the materials to complete the task; to prepare their own plans of action or orders of work and so on. This may require alternatives to copying notes or recipes; or deletion of much cake and pastry cookery for example. In textiles classes the value of samplers, or particular garments might be questioned, and courses examined for their appropriateness to the present and future needs of both boys and girls.

Teaching styles:

Teaching styles tended to be teacher-directed and information based.

1 See for example "Concepts for nutrition education", in Nutrition guide for school services. Canberra: A.G.P.S., 1977, p.6.

If home economics is to emphasise practical problem solving then inquiry-based teaching would be implied. Research indicates that changes to more student-directed inquiry-based teaching are among the most difficult to make and require strong support structures including appropriate qualifications.

Qualifications:

Most home economics teachers interviewed were less than four year trained and there are teachers with only two years of formal training (although for purposes of employment, experience counts as equivalent status). Where teachers do up-grade to four-year qualifications there is no requirement that the additional studies should strengthen existing qualifications and there are difficulties in the ACT in doing so. Home economics teachers are qualifying by taking courses in non-related areas such as mathematics or librarianship.

It is possible however for teachers to undertake academic courses in the areas of health and social science and these are relevant to the broader aspects of home economics now being neglected in most schools, (some teachers might well be encouraged to take these courses).

The Canberra CAE does not offer studies in home economics, and this should be questioned. General professional courses (i.e. in education) are available, and the evidence presented in this report indicates that there is a need for more teachers with a strong professional training (including curriculum studies in home economics). Again, these courses might profitably be encouraged.

To the extent to which home economics teachers in the ACT are under-qualified (i.e. less than four years) there are implications for subject leadership both in terms of overall availability of expertise among teachers and in terms of discrimination with respect to senior and administrative positions within the system.

In view of these concerns there is a strong case for affirmative action in favour of less-than four-year qualified teachers in two ways: (1) with respect to courses made available at the Canberra CAE and (2) especially with respect to paid study leave. There are precedents for such action elsewhere: in Victoria paid study leave has been available to three-year trained teachers very nearly on application for well over a decade.

Support:

Colleagues in schools were universally regarded as supportive but there was little help available in schools to assist in innovation with respect to curriculum or methodology.

With respect to leadership positions, teachers claim that the present promotional system, closely linked to faculty leadership (in which home economics is often subsumed under

industrial arts) effectively discriminates against them. There are few home economics teachers in leadership positions above band 2 level and none in senior administrative and decision makin positions at central level. If promotion is to continue to be tied to subject leadership, then all subjects should be represented at the band 2 level, and above.

The leadership problem exacerbates the difficulties caused by the lower levels of professional training referred to earlier. It is further complicated by the fact that there has never been a consultant appointed who is, first, a qualified home economics teacher and second, has full-time responsibility for home economics.

The present consultant has much to offer home economics teachers since she has a background in general curriculum and in art/textiles, but she perceives her role as wider than home economics consultancy thus reducing the time available for school support.

In view of the relative isolation and small scale of the ACT Schools Authority body, there is a need for a strong system of support.

It is recommended that a full-time curriculum consultant who is qualified and experienced in the area be made available in addition to general curriculum consultants.

Facilities and Resources:

Resources were adequately supplied and most facilities modern and well-kept. Facilities were however barely adequate in size for classes of 20 students.

In the home science department there was not sufficient dining room space for seating a full class. In textiles departments storage was poor. Textiles rooms with work space for 20 students did not have room for a cutting table and cutting out was in one class being attempted on the floor. Future planning in textiles rooms should consider the likelihood of the textiles curriculum expanding to include processes which require a wet area (e.g. batik, dyeing) and bulky storage (bulk fibres, material offcuts).

It is recommended that planning of specialist facilities including storage, be carried out with the advice of the home economics consultant and the home economics personnel concerned.

INDUSTRIAL ARTS

Industrial Arts teachers in many ACT high schools have the benefit of working in relatively new schools with correspondingly new equipment. As a group they display maturity and the benefits of their diverse origins, training and experience. Their subject area appears to be well accepted by students, parents and administrators. They are free of any perceived constraints which may result from external examinations or detailed prescribed syllabus statements.

Approaching this consultancy in the knowledge of the ACT concept of local curriculum development there was an expectation of finding a wide diversity in organisation, content, method and curriculum planning models.

While there are numerous exciting developments in the structure of industrial arts courses and there is much commendable teaching occurring, there is the impression that in regard to most areas of content and method the schools present as a well-preserved time capsule of New South Wales content and method, circ. 1970's.

General Situation

Based on the assumption that the four schools presented were a representative sample of current industrial arts curriculum in ACT high schools the following generalised description could be made:

* The subject is isolationist in that only rarely is any attempt made to link curriculum to either primary craft or college industrial arts curriculum nor are there any significant linkages to other subject areas. This is generally true regardless of school philosophy or architectural style;

* The content is conservative. Woodwork, Metalwork and technical drawing are universal with plastics in some schools. Only one school in the sample has given significant emphasis to "design" as the basis of a course of study;

* The teaching strategies are very traditional. The areas of woodwork and metalwork are dominated by a teacher-centred skills orientation while technical drawing is characterised by significant amounts of lock-step tuition. There is no memorable use in program or practice of small group techniques, problem solving, design strategies, work station simulation or industrial visits;

* In Year 7 all students (both boys and girls) are exposed to an "art/craft" course consisting of unrelated short segments of such activities as woodwork, needlework, art, metalwork, home science, etc. No school attempts to integrate this offering around a design or any other theme;

* In Years 8, 9 and 10 students may elect a course which is, most commonly, based on semester or year-long units. Various industrial arts courses are among the elective courses. In some schools encouragement is given to students to study "in depth" once an election is made. (This may be for administrative as much as for educational reasons);

* Industrial Arts classes are not usually streamed on any basis but do gather disproprtionate numbers of lower ability level students;

* The variation of teaching programs in order to cater for the more talented or the less able student is most commonly achieved by varying the pace at which the program is attempted. In general all students enrolled in the one course follow the same program;

* Boys overwhelmingly outnumbered girls in Years 8, 9 and 10 elective classes;

* While it is possible in most schools for a student to complete the four years of high school with only one term of technical craft studied in most schools the elective industrial arts courses are popular (especially with boys);

* In every school the following documentation was stated as being available:

  (a) Education Program as approved by the Authority.

  (b) Industrial Arts Courses of Study as registered with the Authority. In two out of the four cases the Courses of Study had been significantly varied from the copies supplied for purposes of this Review.

  (c) Industrial Arts Teaching Programs. These documents are more detailed explanations of what is to be taught in each Course of Study and in industrial arts are generally project based (or, less frequently, skills based) or theory based. In most schools this facet of documentation was incomplete according to the school's own requirements.

  (d) Industrial Arts Faculty Policies. Documentation under this heading varied widely from one school to another. Most had a safety policy statement and a student assessment policy (though the latter was incomplete in 50% of schools).

Relative to the Terms of Reference

Congruence: There is no lack of congruence between the written Authority philosophy, school philosophy and subject aims as all of these are broadly written statements. There are major incongruities between what is written and what is practised as well as between the Authority's priority policy

statements (not viewed as mandatory in any way by most schools and completely unknown to most Band 1 industrial arts teachers) and industrial arts teacher's programs and activities. These incongruities will only be overcome when awareness of their existence is noted and acknowledged through structured supervisory techniques and clear lines of accountability.

The major incongruities in industrial arts are:

* registered courses not being taught as registered e.g. aims which emphasise design but teaching strategies involving little or no design emphasis;

* industrial arts written programs which plan only the theoretical aspects of what is to be taught but which are related to assessment policies which (usually) allocate 60% of the grading to practical work;

* teachers not implementing the teaching program devised corporately within their own faculty or not following faculty policies deemed mandatory;

* teaching strategies working against stated aims e.g. (1) lock-step teacher-centred methods being over utilised in technical drawing when the written course outline and/or teaching program emphasises student thinking and problem solving. e.g. (2) the use of teacher selected practical tasks throughout woodwork and metalwork courses where the written aims speak of the need to develop creativity and where the Authority emphasises the need to encourage critical thinking and to foster creative vision and talent".

In each school one or more of the above incongruities exist.

Development: Generally the Course of Study and the teaching programs in industrial arts are determined by corporate decision making. In most schools these are regarded as guidelines which individual teachers are free to vary. It is rare to find any documentation recording these variations and even more unusual to find any structured methods by which Band 2 teachers gain feedback about what is being taught or about how it is being taught.

Evaluation by individual teachers of their own teaching program occurs continually but there is little formalisation or structuring of this or of course (or total faculty) offerings except at course registration time.

Most teachers express little concern at the lack of curriculum links with primary school craft programs but they do see value in establishing closer ties with the Colleges. It is perceived that these closer links will improve pupil performance in college courses. Most industrial arts teachers were opposed to the integration of their subjects with others in the school and saw minimim opportunity for useful co-ordination except at a resource sharing level.

Apart from those in one school, most industrial arts teachers do not see the lack of articulation, integration or co-ordination as a problem to them or to their students. No industrial arts staff saw pupil mobility as a problem as they all considered the number of students involved to be fairly small.

Resources: All teachers in the schools reviewed were appropriately qualified to teach aspects of industrial arts education but their continuing professional development is a matter of concern. Many young teachers firmly expressed the desire for more in-school assistance with strategies etc. Band 2 teachers frequently expressed concerns about their roles and methods of fulfilling them. It was difficult to find a teacher who had recently attended an in-service activity relevant to industrial arts education or curriculum design. At all levels there was a stated desire for more guidance and support from those at the next level. It was surprising to find frequently a lack of knowledge by more senior staff of what their staff were really doing.

Physical resources are appropriate but widespread lack of maintenance and repairs is interfering with the implementation of courses of study to varying degrees.

All industrial arts departments visited have access to a general assistant either full or part-time and this is a necessity where materials are supplied in bulk and where maintenance has been so erratic.

A curriculum consultant, part of whose activities are directly related to the support of industrial arts teachers in ACT schools, has his effectiveness in the area of professional development limited by other activities. In the field of industrial arts some of these could be undertaken by a technical officer (shared perhaps across several areas such as art, science, etc.)

Many of the problems facing industrial arts education in ACT high schools are probably common to other subject areas.

The major issues to emerge which would effectively improve the standard, order and coherence in industrial arts education without removing the present autonomy and responsibility for local curriculum development are:

* the need to determine methods of opening the system at a professional level related to the content, teaching strategies, curriculum development and resources;

* the need to clarify and specify the supervision/ awareness, professional development, accountability and curriculum development roles of Band 2, 3 and 4 teachers;

* the need to clarify the professional development responsibilities of master teachers;

* the need to clarify what system documents (or parts thereof) are mandatory;

* the need to state clearly those documents and/or processes which schools and departments must develop.

The following matters specific to Industrial Arts should be reviewed:

* information was provided which indicated systemic inequality of possible educational experiences as where new schools are provided with a milling machine not available to existing schools. A program of upgrading older schools to the current standard should be considered;

* the Authority should consider pupil welfare/safety to be a system responsibility and undertake the specific provision of eye protection for students and teachers. Currently some of the schools visited are "forced" to make a choice between the supply of materials and the retention of old, scratched and potentially dangerous eye protection.

LANGUAGES

Languages Subject Area

From second or third-hand knowledge and heresay there were expectations that secondary education in the ACT would lead to something innovative and exciting. The reality is not like that at all.

In particular, it was expected that there would be a balance of traditional, sequential language courses and a variety of shorter (say, two semester) courses either to meet special interests or for special purposes. In reality, there appears to be little other than the traditional language course aiming at a fairly high developed range of skills usually achieved by very few students and likely to perpetuate an essentially elitist approach to language learning. In one school, courses related to French, German or Roman (ancient) civilisations operate in Semester 2. There was no opportunity to observe them at the time of the year when the visit was made. In another school two or three "interest" courses are on the prospectus but cannot be offered because of staff unavailability.

Given a degree of flexibility of attitude and a modification of traditional expectations, there seems no reason why an educationally viable language learning experience could not be offered over four semesters, for example. Clearly, in a subject where sequential and cumulative learning is built-in, there is a need for some continuity, but there seems no reason for continuity to go to the extreme of all language learning running for six semesters, as is usually the case. The problem is that teachers are concerned about "achievement", possibly with the unconscious criterion of native speaker achievement in mind, an unreal expectation in any circumstances. A second concern of teachers is the flow on to secondary colleges, where a certain level of achievement is traditionally expected. To counter this kind of problem, there seems to be the possibility of limiting the skills to be achieved. It would be possible, in a four semester course (perhaps Years 9 and 10) to achieve a reasonable degree of skill in reading for comprehension and simple conversation, for example, as distinct from written command of the language. These aims essentially apply to the very successful courses in NSW known as Z courses intended for Year 11 beginners.

In addition to such sequential courses, schools could be offering, even with existing staff, 1 or 2 semester courses (perhaps in Year 8) of general interest or covering a specific aspect of a language and/or its civilization. A certain amount of such preliminary study might be seen as a prerequisite for the longer, sequential langauge courses. It is not necessarily the case that language learning is best done by younger students. Motivation, presentation, sense of achievement, and the use of interesting teaching materials are all more important than the age level of students. On the other hand the younger pupils could be given sequential language learning

(Years 7-8) with the optional courses for say 2 semesters which could occur in Years 9 and 10. There should also be the possibility of six (or even 8) semester courses for those who want them. A concern is that such courses (i.e. 6 semester sequential) are the only option in schools in spite of the apparent "freeing up" of the curriculum as a result of, among other things, the removal of any formal external assessment at the end of Year 10. Interesting possibilities arise in providing courses across faculties with the participation of teachers from other disciplines, achieving a degree of integration of studies which is not evident at present. Some examples might be Italian Opera (Languages/Music), French Cuisine (Languages/Home Economics) The Archaeology of Italy (Languages/History). Along with such an approach would go the opening up of language and language related studies to students who might otherwise not gain such experience.

There is clearly a link between staffing formulae and breadth of curriculum. The Schools Authority appears to support the concept of interdisciplinary studies and/or integration of subject areas. Some flexibility of staffing* is necessary to implement this kind of approach. There must also be increasing goodwill on the part of teachers and a greater breadth of understanding and outlook on the part of Assistant Principals (Curriculum), and the opportunity for balancing teacher loads across faculties to allow for contributions outside their own (traditional) areas. Further, the participation of a consultant (or consultants) would be essential for the writing of new courses and the adaptation of existing courses to produce viable and valid courses of, say, four semester length involving limited skills and clearly defined goals.

As appears the case with other subject areas, it is suggested that there is a need for some guidelines without prescription to enable teachers to have some confidence in the programs they prepare and to provide some community of ground covered in a system where there is a degree of mobility. At present, teachers cling desperately to teaching materials prepared for the US or UK market and it is the commercially produced "course" that provides the security they seek. At present, the Authority is not fulfilling the responsibility it sets for itself in the paper Sources of Existing Curriculum Policy for Government Schools viz. "the responsibility to provide support in the form of information, guidance and resources to assist schools ..." (p.4).

Finally, a comment on Year 7. Most schools adopt an exploratory approach at this stage. If this continues to be the case, strong advice is against the tendency to offer too much variety of language experience i.e. a "taste" of many languages. Here, it seems there is in some schools, the opposite of the prolonged sequential study evident in Years 8-9-10. The Year "roundabout" involving six weeks each, say, of French, Music, German, Art, Indonesian and Home Economics is not usually successful.

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* Refer Campbell Report, Recommendations 45, 46.

In Summary

- schools appear not to have taken advantage of the opportunities to open up the curriculum
- to assist in reaching the Authority's aims, the appointment of a well qualified consultant is essential, assuming that a clear policy can be framed and implemented concerning the role of the consultant
- the place of language learning in Year 7 needs to be considered carefully by all concerned
- in addition to the services of a consultant (or equivalent service to schools) the involvement and understanding of Assistant Principals (Curriculum) needs to be increased and deepened
- broadly based curriculum guidelines should be made available to schools for each subject area, not to prescribe, but rather to support and give direction. Bibliographies would form part of such statements.

General Comments

In more general areas, the following points need comment:-

1. As suggested elsewhere, little use seems to have been made of the opportunity to "open up" the curriculum by offering a variety of courses providing for interests and abilities that will vary widely. In this context, a very real danger must be pointed out. Some guidelines need to be drawn up so that a student, over Years 7-10 will not take only a series of unconnected semester courses. There will be a need to insist on some sequential courses, perhaps by defining some kind of core, perhaps simply by requiring English (however defined) to be compulsory throughout, at least 6 semesters of Mathematics (or some degree of Mathematics throughout, with elective extensions where students wish), perhaps a minimum of 6 semesters of productive/creative studies (Languages, Art, Music). Whatever the details, a balance of studies is vital along with the concept of parity of status of subjects. There should be no sense of core + electives where the core is important and the electives are expendable luxuries. Rejected also is the notion that one must avoid "academic" studies, where "academic" = intellectually demanding. If "academic" = unreasonably theoretical i.e. theoretical beyond students' maturity, then <u>that</u> notion of academic is rejected. However, both students and parents in significant numbers seek studies that challenge. This being so, one cannot on the one hand say "We will meet the community's needs", and on the other "so long as these needs to not represent a challenge to the intellect".

2. Consultants

There appears to be a need for more planned use of consultants in a genuine consultant/advisory/support/in-service role.

Teachers seem to feel that consultants' time is too much committed to projects on behalf of the Authority. The support consultants could give, the injection of ideas to an otherwise inward-looking, relatively small system could be of immense value.

3. A Languages Consultant

The Authority appears to support initiatives in Languages teaching (see Sources of Existing Curriculum etc. pp. 13-15). If these stated aims are to be realised, the appointment of an appropriate Consultant is essential. Among his/her duties would be promotion of in-service activities, the development of policies (perhaps common to all or several schools) in co-operation with teachers and the dissemination of ideas.

Further, both the French and German Governments have advisers available through their Cultural Services and the employment of such people, even on a part-time basis, or shared with the tertiary sector (and the Colleges, of course) should be investigated.

Support can be given in a form other than by traditional consultancy services. Release from teaching for one month or a task force of four experienced teachers, perhaps with a leader from outside the system, might, for example, be a useful way of producing worth while curriculum statements.

4. Articulation of the Curriculum

There is little evidence of this, but also, as far as could be judged, little problem is evident either, with one important exception. The exception relates to the teaching of various languages in some primary schools. The Authority appears to support this in principle. If this is so, efforts will need to be made to ensure that pupils can continue the <u>same</u> language, if they wish, in the high school as they have started in the primary school. This may necessitate placement in a special "continuing" class as distinct from another group with no prior experience. This problem has bedevilled primary school language teaching in other places, where the "flow-on" to high school was left to chance. The ACT is, at this moment, in a position to avoid this, and would be wise to do so.

No evidence was seen that high schools need feel unduly dominated by the Colleges' expectations. Colleges can be expected to take up the leeway, if any, by adjusting their starting points or by providing bridge-courses.

5. Congruence of Aims and Practice

A problem area, with both statements of aims and practice needing modification. Statements of goals tend to be ideal and might be better expressed in terms of behavioural outcomes than as ideals to be aimed for. Practice i.e. the product delivered in the classroom might be more realistic and relevant if geared to clearly stated objectives, realistically expressed.

6. Mechanisms for Ensuring Integration etc.

No evidence of this was observed. It appears the Authority is committed to the concept. It would appear that this is an area in which Assistant Principals (Curriculum) could be active. There would appear to be a need for in-service for AP's in this area.

7. Band 2 positions

A need is seen for much greater expectations of teachers in Band 2 positions in terms of supervision of Band 1 teachers and responsibility for content of curriculum and quality of teaching. Practice appears to vary considerably and there appears to be a need for a clearer definition of their duties or a mandatory statement to supplement the usual duty statements.

MATHEMATICS AND COMPUTING

Introduction

In a review of this type, it is all too easy to focus on perceived deficiencies in the system being reviewed. While it is essential that existing and potential deficiencies be identified, it is equally important to identify the positive aspects of the system and to ensure that these areas are maintained and strengthened where possible.

As a general comment, the most unsatisfactory school situation observed was about the same as one would expect in an unsatisfactory school situation in another system. The best observed was not nearly as good as any of the better schools in other systems, but this may be a result of only sampling four schools.

The areas commented on in this brief report would, it is suspected be similar to those for a review of any other school system in Australia - all of which could benefit from a periodical review that requires them to state their aims and objectives and seeks to find the extent to which the written statements are reflected by classroom practice.

Mathematics

On average, each school visited had seven mathematics teachers, the majority of whom held degrees in mathematics. Mathematics faculties were better academically qualified than the average in SA.

In every school, the mathematics teachers taught nothing but mathematics. While this provides students with qualified mathematics teachers, it also results in stratification of faculty interests within each school, with the mathematics faculty existing in an insular fashion in the school. The teachers were, in the main, functionally unaware of the work being done in other faculty areas, even in Science, where mathematics is used as a tool.

The mathematics teaching in every case consisted of a teacher in front of a class seated in rows of tables with the teacher explaining an example exercise followed by student work on similar exercises - "talk and chalk", teacher exposition methodology. This was true regardless of the school architecture. School statements regarding a variety of teaching styles were not substantiated by the practice observed, and not only in mathematics. In the classrooms visited or observed while walking about the schools, the teaching methodology was reasonably consistent with that observed for mathematics. The only variation was in the quality of teaching which ranged from excellent "traditional" teaching, to totally inadequate.

The documentation provided as curriculum statements consisted, in the main, of topic lists prefaced by a paragraph or two of broad aims. They were not really curriculum statements at all. There was insufficient detail regarding objectives, expected student outcomes, teaching methodology to be employed, assessment techniques etc. to enable an informed statement about the congruence between written statements and classroom practice to be made in most instances.

The mathematics faculty in each school had a set of home rooms, but these were not clearly identifiable as such. There was a lack of display material in all schools. A few classrooms had some evidence of their main use via a display of geometric models and a few charts, but the majority were bare. This says something about the nature of the teaching.

The main instrument in the mathematics teaching process was the text book, usually of NSW origin. Only one school showed much evidence of teachers selecting material from a variety of sources to present to students. This school had prepared a number of booklets on topics that were relevant to the students - although this material was used in a traditiona fashion rather than as the means of achieving more student centred teaching.

The majority of teachers observed teach mathematics not students.

It would appear that the majority of mathematics teachers do not give a great deal of attention to developing a philosophy towards the teaching of mathematics that involves them in coming to grips with issues related to the reason for inclusion of particular areas of mathematics in the school curriculum. Mathematics is compulsory and hence teachers do not have to "compete" for students on the merit, relevance and appropriate presentation of their courses.

There was little evidence of attention being given to the ten "Basic Mathematical Skills and Concepts for Effective Participation in Australian Society" and few teachers were able to discuss the questions printed in this Australian Mathematics Education Project leaflet.

Only one school had unitised its mathemtics offering to allow students to take mathematics topics at a level consistent with their ability in that subject rather than as a member of a streamed year group i.e. it was possible for a student to take a Year 9 mathematics topic while in Year 10.

Insufficient use is made of the assistance available from the subject consultant, the mathematics teachers' association and other schools. Each classroom is treated as an entity in itself with little interaction with anything else in the majority of cases. There is insufficient knowledge of other faculty work, mathematics in other schools (primary, high and college), and mathematics teaching trends in Australia and overseas.

There is no person or group with authority to provide general guidelines for mathematics teachers and to ensure that schools are accountable for the quality of the mathematics experiences that they offer to children.

There were no examples of innovative mathematics teaching in any of the schools visited. Where has the energy and enthusiasm gone that separately marked the formation of the current system?

While there was evidence of college mathematics courses influencing the content of the high school courses, there is possibly a more significant influence on student attitudes towards mathematics resulting from the junior primary school approach to mathematics. It may well be profitable to do a study of the attitudes towards mathematics expressed by junior primary school teachers and the effect that these attitudes have upon students.

Summary

The mathematics teaching has not changed markedly from that which existed when the schools were part of the NSW system. This has resulted in insufficient progress in presenting students with relevant experience in mathematics. Teacher insularity and inability or unwillingness to participate in the required continual process of curriculum evolution are perhaps the major obstacles to be overcome. The existing courses require modification now and the means to ensure that teachers have the motivation, skills and time to do this do not appear to exist in the current situation. The academic qualifications exist, but the curriculum development skills either do not exist or are well hidden by day to day activities.

Computing

Computing activities in the high schools visited were relatively low key (non-existent in one school). The computer is generally seen as a vehicle for computer awareness courses or computer programming electives in mathematics. Neither of these are appropriate activities for mathematics courses. Little evidence was available to suggest that computing is being developed as a general curriculum resource.

In mathematics, no evidence was provided to show that teachers have considered the impact of the computer on the mathematics curriculum. Topics such as sequences and series trinomials (and polynomials), solution of equations, etc. will undergo radical change with the increased availability of computing facilities. (Some schools are still teaching the use of logarithms in a manner that was phased out of most schools with the introduction of the electronic calculator.)

One of the major initial impacts of computing on the school curriculum is likely to be in the area of children's written composition. Use of an appropriate word processing facility provides the student with a powerful tool to use in writing.

There was no evidence of initial thought in this direction (none of the schools had word processing software for the computers that they were using - Apple II and ZX81's).

Two of the schools did not offer students access to keyboards to enable them to acquire keyboard skills. The lack of keyboards (typewriter or computer) and skilled typing teachers presents a problem that must be overcome in the near future.

One school has negotiated release time for a librarian to introduce computing into the school and to liaise with local primary schools. This, (and the valuable work done by the computing consultant), is a step in the right direction, but it would have been more effective to have trained the person concerned first to avoid the problem of inappropriate advice being given.

There are no system wide guidelines for schools computing in the ACT. The advice that is available from the college level is based on experience that predetermines it towards the preparation of college Computer Studies students, not towards the use of the computer as an intellectual tool.

There is evidence that some individual teachers are interested in developing use of computing in their teaching interest areas, but do not know where to start. They are further hampered by a lack of appropriate computing facilities. Only two such teachers were encountered in the four schools visited, but other members of the review team reported interest in other schools.

Should the Schools Commission be funded to embark on a schools computing programme, the ACT school system is in an ideal position to capitalise on the possible resources to be provided - a small number of schools, academically qualified staff, and geographical concentration of schools. The lack of system wide guidelines, forward planning and the current state of lack of readiness definitely negate the advantages at present.

General

Leaders in the school system provide administrative support to the people they are responsible for, but there is a lack of professional development support at all levels. The school Principal is a key person in a system that does not provide the Inspector or Principal Education Officer function. The tone of the schools visited was dictated by the quality of the Principal to a far greater degree than is the case in SA and teacher morale is directly linked to strong leadership.

The Band 2 faculty head is the key person in the curriculum development process at present. There was no evidence of curriculum initiatives from School Boards. The Boards act as "rubber stamps". Similarly, the requirement to register copies of curriculum statements with the Schools Authority is a paper exercise that has no observable effect on classroom practice.

These ineffective procedures should be removed from the system as their only result is to promote an air of cynicism.

Where there is life in the school system, it is in the growing, new schools with small student populations and selected staff. The problem is to maintain intellectual vigour and motivation in teachers in other schools - a problem not peculiar to the ACT.

It is appropriate to determine the factors that lead to imaginative and effective teaching and to generate or simulate those factors at all school levels. Some areas that are worthy of consideration are:

(a) External rewards

This category includes promotion or salary loadings for individual teachers. In a situation where the total number of teachers is not increasing and resignations are declining some possibilities include:

- Limited tenure promotion
- Task oriented, contracted, salary loadings to meet specific school or system needs
- Rotation of faculty head position between people who nominate for it, or election on a yearly basis
- Definition of a faculty head, administrative position with contract salary loadings as above for Band 1 teachers to complete specific tasks
- Increased opportunity to visit other school systems (on a scholarship basis, with expenses paid by the Authority) for outstanding teachers - possibly chosen by a panel of peers.

(b) Internal rewards

This frequently comes from a sense of satisfaction resulting from seeing children benefitting from the teachers' effort. By ensuring that teachers have a pleasant, effective working environment and that they have access to the tools to improve their teaching, the Authority can, through the schools, provide the conditions that allow teachers to feel good about their teaching (and be justified in doing so).

(c) Other factors

The age structure of the teaching force, in a static or declining enrolment situation, will move towards a majority of older teachers. It is desirable that students be provided with learning experiences at school from a teaching force with as wide an age structure as possible.

Apart from forced early retirement (a short term solution in any case) it is difficult to see a solution to this problem.

There is a tendency to close schools with declining enrolments in favour of schools with student populations of around 750. While the economics may not be attractive, there is a case to be put for small schools where teachers know most or all of the students.

The consultant service is not being effectively used at the present time. The insular self-satisfied attitude of some schools results in consultants not being used at all by some schools. The role of the consultant needs to be better defined and made clearly known to the schools. The use of people from outside the ACT system could assist in bringing fresh ideas into the system.

While it may seem a small point, most staff working areas and staff rooms were poorly furnished, acoustically poor and totally unattractive in appearance. It would do a great deal for staff morale and for the building of a staff identity to refurbish staff rooms with carpet, attractive, comfortable furnishings and some amenities. This should not be left as a staff expense.

If there is not positive action taken as a result of this review, the result will be to ensure that a cynical attitude is taken towards any future moves to effect change in the ACT school system. "Positive action" in this case means a move towards providing a more relevant, effective education for students.

6. Recommendations

In any future review of this type, it would be more effective to spend a half a day in each school to allow each school reviewer to visit a greater number of schools.

Mathematics teachers should be encouraged to teach at least one subject outside of the mathematics faculty in a subject they are qualified to teach.

A variety of teaching approaches should be encouraged - lecture, talk and chalk, small group, team teaching etc.

Curriculum statements should not simply be content orientated, but should contain testable objective statements related to expected student outcomes, teaching methodology, assessment techniques, relevance to current and future student needs etc.

Mathematics teachers should be encouraged to prepare student material that is appropriate to the students and the activity being taught rather than strictly adhering to a text book.

As a means of breaking down school insularity, each school could be required to provide a 2-3 person team to review the curriculum of at least 3 other schools each year.

There is a need for the formation of one or more groups to develop guidelines to provide forward development direction for the teaching in ACT schools. This end could be achieved in several ways:

(a) A compulsory meeting of Band 2 mathematics teachers for one day per term to develop guidelines.

(b) The setting up of limited time duration "task force" groups on a volunteer basis, with personnel drawn from across the school system.

(c) Standing curriculum committees.

These groups could be unique in Australia with total school representation and the means to immediately implement decisions.

Computer programming and computer awareness courses should not be offered as ends in themselves and not as part of a mathematics course. The use of the computer in electronic blackboard mode as a teaching aid in mathemtics, mathematics oriented CAI material and the use of the computer as an intellectual tool are appropriate activities for mathematics classes.

All schools must give attention to the task of providing students with the opportunity to acquire a sufficient level of keyboard skill to enable them to effectively use a computer.

Curriculum committees should be formed in all major subject areas. As part of their charter, these committees should be required to examine the impact of the computer on their subject - its content, presentation and future direction. One of these committees should be concerned with teaching about computers - computer awareness courses, computer programming etc.

Professional development management is a skill that must be developed in all promotion position personnel, particularly Principals. These people must be able to concentrate less on day to day administrative detail and more on ongoing staff professional development.

The practice of School Boards being required to approve curriculum statements and of these statements being lodged with the Authority needs review to either make it effective or to abandon it.

A review of the role of the subject consultant should be undertaken to provide the people involved with greater opportunities for job satisfaction and to ensure a maximum return to the entire system. Given the small size of the ACT

system, it may be appropriate to consider contracting use of skilled personnel from other state systems for short term duty as consultants, working with a key ACT person.

Schools must be made aware of the recommendations of the review committee and must see some improvement in the school system as a result of the review. The Authority is seen as having ignored the primary school review and will not retain credibility if it is seen to ignore this review as well.

MUSIC

Preamble

The terms of reference were given and the schools were selected prior to the visit of eleven external subject specific people to the ACT in March, 1983. The following report is part of the work of the High School Review Committee which requested, in this instance, a 'state of the art' report following visits to schools, other relevant education institutions and discussions with a range of people. It is not a subject evaluation but a collection of perceptions and gleanings from information provided by music teachers, educators and administrators.

The model of an external review of a subject area has proved to be very useful and the reflection on the reviewer's home state education scenario is evidence of mutual benefit. The assumption then is that the teachers who agreed to have their programmes reviewed also gained some professional value from the exercise. The music teachers have requested a teacher development programme with leadership in curriculum development and a forum for discussing common concerns and future directions. This will, of necessity, need to occur at a later date. Their industry, goodwill and high degree of commitment to high school students, music and general educational issues was outstanding. While teachers may feel the need for an advocate and a coordinating focus for their work, the implicit demand for music education leadership appropriate to their work is a major concern. The individual school information was categorized into:

- curriculum process
- professional development
- staffing (classroom and instrumental)
- special provisions (resources and facilities)
- curriculum management (timetable, continuity, school communication)
- external factors (primary schools, colleges, tertiary, professional associations)
- the system (Authority)
- the overview of the music education scene in the ACT as it relates to national and international developments.

The report addresses these within the terms of reference, indicates perceptions and makes specific recommendations for future consideration.

Terms of Reference Report

Aims

1. Congruence between subject aims and school philosophy; also between these two and Authority philosophy and priority policies as listed in "Sources of Existing Curriculum Policy".

The philosophy of the schools often states explicitly that the central concern or focus is the individual progress of the students through its courses with the aim of preparing them for adult society. The process of devising an education programme which caters for all the needs of the students during four years of high school attendance is often inhibited by an incoherence in the system. While core curriculum, as interpreted in the ACT, school based curriculum development without sufficient personnel and material resources and the inflexibility of subject specific disciplines exist, the task of putting the stated philosophy into school practice is hindered.

The subject aims are not always concordant, in written terms, with the philosophy of the schools. The transfer of broad educational aims to subject descriptions is more clearly seen in the methodology and approach to the welfare of the students. Music has a powerful capacity to contribute to learning through the necessity to sing and play together and to create and recreate artistic expressions. The social and even societal spin offs and expectations are evident in the schools.

The overarching statement "Sources of Existing Curriculum Policy for Government Schools" is reflected in the school philosophy statements but again, the practice in the classroom is not fully congruent because of the perceived need for subject rationale statements, course development guidelines and course content materials to assist teachers as individual curriculum developers. Where a team of teachers are working together in developing subject aims consistent with school and Authority statements, the music programme is cohesive and purposeful. Where one or two teachers with the assent of senior management work alone in developing subject aims, the outcome is not as successful. There is a tendency to leave music and the arts not only outside the core but also to isolate it, inadvertently by leaving the total task to the subject teacher who is perceived as the only expert. Music needs to be enfolded into the hub of the curriculum and balanced with other subjects or areas.

2. Appropriateness of Aims at all Levels

The variety of descriptions of the aims gives the impression of a lack of cohesion and continuity as well as providing an idiosyncratic approach to learning through music. In some schools students were clearly learning about and learning music. In others, the subject was the vehicle for learning in and learning through music. The description of the aims made this dichotomy clear. As the students progressed, in information terms, the Years 9 and 10 aims tended to become theoretical in a music language sense and the transfer of external music examination syllabus material into the statement of aims was not indicative of the level and amount of learning that was occurring. Teachers need assistance in freeing up the course aims across the spectrum so that the polarisation of statements like 'experience a wide variety of musical styles' and 'acquire musical knowledge and skills' is transformed into

a learning continuum. A personal view is that much writing about the aims of music may negate the knowledge and intrinsic experience of music itself which relies solely on sound and not necessarily language.

Curriculum

1. Process by which curriculum is developed; (a) whole school, (b) within the department, (c) at individual class level.

The music curriculum development process which hinges on the capacity of a small number of teachers to articulate what they wish to do is overburdened by intensive documentation and the complexities of curriculum 'approval' processes through the School Curriculum Committee, the Assistant Principal, Curriculum, the School Board, the Authority's register of courses and the Year 10 Certificate. Despite the commitment to whole school curriculum development, most music teachers find themselves too busy with extra-curricular work - orchestra/ bands/choirs - and lacking in real subject specific curriculum support to make a vital contribution. There is an urgent need for the appointment of a high school music curriculum consultant to assist and support teachers in developing subject statements and courses.

Within music departments the curriculum development task is either undertaken by a Band 2 teacher consulting with members of the music staff or by the sole music teacher. Another apparent deficiency is some evidence of non-integration of the instrumental lessons provided by the Authority with the school music programme. The responsibility for this integration is two-fold - the band consultant and the class music teacher.

Individual classes do not always support the description of the curriculum development process. Some teachers may have difficulty in becoming flexible as some lock-step methodologies often leave the student out of the learning situation. As well, teachers experience the need to follow the wishes of the students in music classes - on occasion, there is no real evidence of a clear direction and the students are permitted to interrupt the curriculum process with purposeless activities. Teachers expressed the need for curriculum inservice programmes which would assist them in becoming better teachers and curriculum developers.

2. Are there mechanisms for ensuring integration or cooperation in curriculum between departments?

Music, with its need for acoustic separation, often is excluded from working with other learning disciplines. In itself, it has the capacity to work with all curriculum areas, e.g. the making of instruments in industrial arts, the amplification of various social and geographically grouped life-styles, the illustration of mathematical and scientific principles and the elucidation of art, drama and dance. There is cooperation between departments but largely at the level of the school

production. Mechanisms for real integration were not apparent although the possibility is closer than would be possible should a prescriptive central curriculum control be in operation.

3. What parties are involved in curriculum development at these levels?

The Canberra CAE music department is encouraging integration of music with other areas. The schools see themselves as cooperating in educational ventures but real integration between subject disciplines is rare. All teachers and administrators would like to see it occur.

4. Congruence between subject aims and (a) content of written curriculum, (b) curriculum as delivered.

The subject aims and objectives and content of written and practised curriculum are not always congruent. The touchstone is in "what goes on in the classroom". While there is a written commitment to negotiation, learning through music and enjoying making music together, the actual practice is sometimes biassed towards teacher based decision making, learning written notes and insufficient involvement in playing and singing music. The balance between engaging in musical activities - listening, composing, performing - and writing, reading, talking about music needs to be defined, developed, maintained and extended.

5. Appropriateness of written curriculum

Writing a music curriculum suitable for young people is a difficult task particularly if there is no support service to assist teachers. There are no Australian texts in this area and teachers have to resort to devising their own, using UK, USA and European models. The task must be one of adaption rather than adoption. There is clear evidence that teachers are endeavouring to grapple with the issues of sequential and developmental learning. The content of the curriculum indicates that there is accumulated little musical vocabulary prior to high school entry. The teaching of juvenile material to young adults requires a high degree of skill. Documenting the music curriculum to reflect the fostering of a love of music and sequential practical based orientation of the courses means a departure from stilted expressions of rote music content to a flexible, highly intentioned mode.

6. Congruecne between written curriculum and classroom activities.

The written curriculum sometimes bore little resemblance to the classroom activities. Students were often playing with enthusiasm and flair in small ensembles, but this activity was not detailed in the curriculum. (The converse to what was described in 4.) The notion of keeping a log book and then writing the curriculum outline may be a useful exercise to keep the reality of the classroom and the unreality of the

documentation more in kilter. In a number of classes what was claimed was clearly occurring in practice. The problem of quantifying a qualitative exercise is clearly demonstrated in documenting an arts curriculum. Most teachers were better at practising the art plan than writing about it.

7. What steps are taken to ensure articulation of curriculum between Years 6 and 7 and Years 10 and 11?

There are a number of hiccups in the education continuum. They occur whenever a geographical location is intruded into the learning process - from pre-school to junior primary, from junior primary to primary, from primary to high school, from high school to college and from college to tertiary (not forgetting the explosion from school to work). There is little evidence of definite and formal links between Years 6 and 7 and Years 10 and 11. There are informal conversations, negotiations and excursions between primary/high schools and colleges but the impression is tha each group is very active getting its 'own house in order' and neighbourly discussions are part of that exercise. The formalising or 'articulation of curriculum' across these divides is a major task.

8. To what extent are Years 7 to 10 courses influenced by teachers' perceptions of the need for preparation for college?

The establishment of junior high schools and senior colleges has brought with it the very positive concentration of curriculum development for Years 7 to 10 and the perceived responsibility to prepare students for Years 11 and 12. The benefits of developing programmes for Years 7 to 10 are considerable as the age group of the students is critical in respect of forming opinions and being made aware of the variety of artistic experiences. The expectation of most secondary music teachers is that they will teach advanced level material to advanced students. This is not an unnatural expectation which would be realised in part, if there was a viable primary school programme in their subject field. High school teachers in the ACT have the most challenging group of students to teach with arguably a very complex subject. It is complex in resource terms, in knowledge, in practice and in the community expectations that the school teenage group will sing and play musical instruments in a viable if not commercially rewarding way. The pressure on teachers to produce musical students is considerable and while some colleges indicate that no prerequisite is required thereby giving teachers a free rein in course development, others imply that some degree of musical proficiency is essential. Conversely some college music students play in high school ensembles to further their performance experience.

There is a belief that the tertiary entrance scheme which operates on a marks scaling system is disadvantageous to music because of the small numbers taking the subject. Further to this, it has been suggested that few college students continue with music and that this in turn affects the numbers at the

high school given the interpretations of core and elective. The Canberra School of Music has issued a document outlining prerequisites for entrance to its course. This is seen by teachers as placing pressure on some high school music departments to prepare students at Year 10 level for entrance to the only School of Music. Another indicator is that some talented music students choose to study music out of school hours rather than 'miss' a 'proper' subject. Yet another perception is that teachers who work in colleges enjoy greater status than those in high schools.

While colleges cannot be held at ransom for the status of music in high schools, there is some recriminating effect on the high school music teachers' perception of their responsibilities.

9. Problems caused by mobility. How is correct placement of new students assured? How do individual teachers cope?

There is a pessimistic view of a transient education community which is reflected in the mobility of a student population which lives in an artificially created school and suburb. There is a realistic view of a socially polarised school population where up to half of the students cannot pay any school fees and many of them come from high income 'upward mobile' home environments. There is an overall optimistic view that numbers of these mobile students are colourful, spontaneous, industrious and loyal.

The care given to student counselling, in one case by the principal who personally sees all Year 7 and 10 students and parents each year, is exemplary. School counselling services, career education teachers and individual teachers are committed to caring for students. They need support for this in smaller class sizes and more time for talking with individual students. Some of the group discussions in which individual teachers chatted over issues with their students were outstanding examples of a caring educational community. Teachers are aware of the problems and they are committed to helping with the solutions.

10. Are student assessment practices congruent with stated aims and curriculum?

The difficulty of assessing artistic learning areas is a global challenge. Giving a mark for a performance of music is almost in antithesis to the nature of it. However, continuous assessment combined with various forms of tests/examinations is proving to be the best form of assessment practice. The assessment procedures should include a way of indicating attitudes, consistency and flair as well as measuring skills and knowledge. The inclusion of such 'bench-marks' will make the assessment congruent with the aims of music programmes.

11. What moderation procedures are followed?

There is a need for moderation of music courses between schools. It is possible given the capacity to cluster schools and to regularly consult on moderation procedures. In the sample of schools selected for the review there was little evidence of external moderation in music. There was some claim to internal moderation of all courses - the process and outcome was unclear.

12. How are individual subjects and the department's whole offering evaluated? Are changes made as a result of evaluation?

The best example, seen on paper, of evaluation in music occurs by "consultation with other teachers and by lecturers", by "seeking student opinions", by "comparing student assessment with course objectives", by "noting the number of students" who wish to continue learning, by "seeking reasons for students not wanting to continue", by "obtaining feedback from secondary college music faculties" and by "comparison of the course with current trends in music education". The process of evaluation was not indicated and the role of evaluation as a change agent was not described or presented. It seems that the requirements of a system to write words on evaluation ought to be matched with opportunities for developing evaluation models, processes and skills.

13. Is the process of reporting to parents adequate? Is there provision for reporting apart from the schools' formal procedures?

The involvement of parents in the processes and progressions of schooling has wide acceptance. School based curriculum development with the attendant School Board parent representation provides a working framework for maximum mutual benefit to students, parents, teachers and principals. Some schools have regular programmes of parent interview which discuss at length the progress of individual students. Others rely on written student reports with parent interview schedules. The best models of parent/student assessment/progress conversations are highly recommended. All schools may like to consider a similar personalised, systematic approach.

Teachers

1. Are Teachers Appropriately Qualified?

The acceptance of music qualifications which are based on experience, say, as a performer, is a debate which most Australian systems have aired. Just as the four year trained music and education graduate may or may not be a successful classroom music teacher, so a top quality string teacher with solo and orchestral experience and no educational qualifications may be a very acceptable teacher for a class music programme.

The Canberra CAE considers that a four year trained graduate in music and secondary education is best suited for ACT high schools. While there is merit in this stance, the acceptance, in salary and status terms, of a teacher who has high musical ability and some educational qualilfications is imperative if a system of complementary staffing is to occur. This means that more than one music teacher should be appointed to each high school in order that the solitary nature of the task is dissipated. Music in high schools can use people with various skills and interests. Given that in some schools the majority of the instrumental tuition in woodwind, brass, percussion and strings is taught by resident music teachers who also teach Years 7 to 10, conduct the school performances and write the music for students to play, the demands on teachers are great. Another teacher of music can share this load. The service of a peripatetic bandmaster who 'takes' the band during school time, while valued for the most part does not claim responsibility for the school music programme. The solution is not necessarily in more salaries but distributing the music load among more teachers.

Some good music teaching was undertaken by teachers who majored in other disciplines such as physical education and science and who had both a musical interest and a musical instrument that could be shared with their students. The other debate of "a good teacher is preferable to a qualified music educator" continues. In the final analysis any system demands highly competent and qualified teachers for its students. Canberra is in a unique position to ensure that this is the norm.

2. Are teaching styles consonant with school philosophy and aims? Are the schools tolerant of innovative teaching?

The terms of reference have concentrated on congruence of aims and philosophy, writing and practice, teacher and evaluation. While this is an ordered way to approach a review of a school based curriculum system it may overlook the spontaneous and innovative roles that a dynamic education system must play. Teaching styles are personal, idiosyncratic and self perpetuated. Only long term experience and professional exchange will effect a change on teaching. The school philosophy and aims can be revised continuously, but for a system to engender the need for change and to nurture innovation in teaching it must invest considerable expertise and resources into real teacher development programmes where teachers can attend with the support of the system. There is little evidence of innovative teaching. Most teaching confirms current good practice. Some is mediocre. The schools will accept and encourage innovation if it is seen to benefit the students. Hopefully core curriculum and timetable structures will not hinder teaching experimentation, appraisal, modification and extension.

3. How much professional support should teachers expect from subject department, school and Authority? How much to they get?

Teachers who work during and after school hours with large numbers of students each with particular needs and aspirations should expect with confidence as much professional support as the subject department, the school and the Authority can give. Music teachers across the country tend to claim that the demands on their time are so great that they cannot afford to be professionally developed. Like physical education and drama teachers whose working time extends into many out of hours commitments, music teachers need time for renewal. This means in real terms the provision of relief teachers so that they can leave classes to attend nominated conferences which have been structured to meet their particular requests and to extend their horizons.

Without exception the teachers were aware of the lack of opportunity for them to be engaged in professional music education activity which was curriculum based and not of peripheral importance. In the list of scheduled conferences published this year there were no high school music curriculum activities and those group instrumental conferences were seen to be of more value to primary general classroom teachers.

The result of the lack of professional support is shown in the submission to the High Schools Review Committee from a meeting of High School Music Teachers held on 8 December, 1982. In this document they highlight a number of issues raised in this report and some are worthy of particular note by the Review Committee. An invitation by three professional music and education groups was extended to the external consultant to assist with a high school curriculum inservice programme. There is a need for a planned high school curriculum teacher development programme to concentrate on immediate and long term issues.

Resources

1. Comments on the adequacy of facilities, resources and staffing available to the department.

The facilities for music departments are adequate for classroom use but the absence of any acoustically separated practice rooms is surprising. It is apparent that when the schools are built, music is not considered as requiring unique facilities for teaching. As it is dependent on sound and sound separation, with the listening function being crucial to the programme, there is a need for:

acoustically separated classrooms, practice rooms and a large ensemble room

- adequate storage space for musical instruments (ranging from cellos and trombones to classroom percussion) multiple copies of music scores, sheet music, music stands, sensitive audio equipment, records and cassettes, student work
- teacher study/preparation/office area.

The refurbishing of existing music space and the reorganisation of space to include the above requirements is a matter of urgency.

The resources allocated to music were barely adequate but not outstanding. Music is a resource dependent learning area like visual art and industrial arts. We do not expect students to undertake visual art and industrial art without making art and craft works using materials, yet there is evidence that some teachers are expected to engage in music teaching without sufficient instruments and music (recorded and sheet) for use by every student. The current rules which have been given to teachers on music copyright require them to put 20 cents per copy into a 'deposit account' so that in the event of legal action there is money to pay the costs. This situation warrants further investigation with the education copyright authorities as music in schools can neither afford it in financial or organisational time terms. The practice in the ACT is not congruent with other education systems.

Without exception the teachers raised the problem of adequate provision and access to music resources from a central collection at the O'Connell Education Centre. There are two collections. One for those schools who have the services of a band master and who pay $50.00 per annum contribution. The other is a general collection. The need for an appropriate accessible resource collection for all teachers is critical. The resource centre should contain:

- band/ensemble/orchestral scores available to all teachers
- music texts
- music education programmes
- multiple copies of class sets of music and books
- recordings (record and cassettes)
- teacher support materials, e.g. a union file on school programmes and teaching aids
- music teaching aids
- pool of instruments - classroom and orchestral/band music
- national and international music education journal collection.

Some of these items are available to some teachers but a music resource centre needs the capacity to purchase material on the recommendations of all teachers, curriculum committees and consultants. Such a collection is an appropriate service, resource and focus for primary, high and college music teachers.

The staffing of music departments could consult more widely with the clients - the principals and teachers. Making requests for comment on appropriate placement of staff to schools to the Canberra CAE (the principal education training institution) is not considered to be the most appropriate way of meeting the needs of the schools, although tertiary cooperation is appreciated. Strong music departments need not be weakened by the placement of more than one inexperienced teacher in any one year. Music departments who have only one teacher may be considered for placement of a second teacher with music and some other subject offering. The job specifications as indicated by the schools cannot always be met but if the total brass programme can only be accommodated by a teacher who has no practical experience in brass then the students are at risk.

Another request made by all teachers is for the appointment of peripatetic instrumental teachers to complement the work of the band-masters and the classroom teachers. This would mean that flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, tuba, percussion, guitar, violin, viola, cello, bass, etc could be offered to students in primary and secondary schools as appropriate. Some private teachers currently use school premises to teach, and charge students 'normal' fees. But those who cannot pay cannot learn unless they are part of the primary and secondary school band programme. The scheme warrants extension and a level of individual and group instrumental expertise. The string programme must begin at primary school and then flow through to high school. The brass and woodwind programmes can commence at primary and secondary school. The underlying concern is for all those students who want to play an instrument. The appointment of instrumental teaching staff is one solution.

Perceptions

The ACT has the capacity to become a centre of excellence for music education. Geographical proximity and already existing institutions and community aspirations are the foundations for a coordinated, coherent view representing people who have at least two common interests - a love of music and a commitment to young people. The challenge is to bring the teachers, the musicians and the educational community together not to a confederation but to participation in a cooperative network.

The issue of the interpretation of core curriculum as experienced in ACT high schools raises a number of concerns. First it places the arts in an untenable position where their educational value is always relegated to an option. The time-table often inhibits adequate study of the arts and it is possible in some schools for students to study for one semester one of the arts during their total school education. While blocked time and seven day cyclic timetable practices allow for artistic development in some schools, overall the state and status of music in education is neither healthy nor high. It is my impression that visual art and drama suffer similar problems.

The associated question of teacher morale is viewed within this context. Lack of perceived importance and consequently real support for high school music in advisory personnel and appropriate resource terms has produced a zealous, industrious albeit repressed music teaching profession. The lack of the appropriate level of educational leadership in music curriculum contributes to this context. This means that there are commited, talented teachers who are literally waiting to be engaged in professional activity. The pressure on teachers from parents, politics and the parochially unique situation in the ACT has the capacity both to generate outstanding achievements and to drive people into territorial warfare. If the ACT education system is to prepare more musically intelligent and inquisitive students for adult life then the factions within the community must be ameliorated and intentionally blurred by new models of coordination and cooperation.

The description of total based curriculum is like an education pendulum swinging away from a previous prescriptive system. The documentation and approval processes and accountability are hindering the capacity of music teachers to teach. The balance is to be found by introducing curriculum support personnel, adequate resources and time to prepare documentation. In addition, specific curriculum guidelines are essential. It is possible that the ACT and SA could work on a cooperative curriculum development programme for high school music. ACT has the practising curriculum developers SA has recently appointed a writer for the project. This concept is in keeping with the current moves towards reciprocal agreements on curriculum developments between states.

The prospect for ACT school music is an exciting one if the system has the capacity to respond to the needs of its committed teachers and young people. It is to be hoped that this subject review assists, in part, in meeting that challenge.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to the High Schools Review Committee with the intention that they be included in the report to the ACT Schools Authority for future action.

Following the review of selected high schools, discussion with general and music education personnel and consideration of the future of music in schools within the ACT the following recommendations are made:-

Curriculum Process

1) a review of core curriculum with its attendant elective system be undertaken to ensure that music and other arts areas are properly contained within a balance curriculum

2) an K-12 music education rationale statement be adopted* or developed for ACT schools (*Time for Music a 1982 SA Education Department publication may be considered)

3) the Authority consider joining the SA Education Department in its current development task of producing secondary music curriculum guidelines as a reciprocal project

4) steps be taken to integrate the ACT band programme more fully into high school music programmes

5) a study of integrating music with other curriculum areas be undertaken, published and put into practice

6) curriculum links between Years 6 and 7, 10 and 11 be formalised to ensure continuity in the music curriculum

7) research be undertaken into the more appropriate methods to assess artistic achievement

8) moderators from schools be appointed for a term of three years to assist with the moderation of high school music programmes

9) models of music curriculum innovation be promulgated.

Professional Development

10) a needs survey be conducted on appropriate teacher development programmes for high school music teachers and that these be scheduled for the 1984 school year and thereafter

11) relief teachers be made available to ensure that music teachers are released to attend professional development conferences

12) schools be encouraged to form 'cluster groups' for professional self-help activities

13) steps be taken to lessen the stress placed on teachers by a variety of factors and that some solutions to 'teacher burn-out' be carried out in the context of a teacher development programme by the Authority

14) provision be made for music teachers to upgrade their qualifications out of school hours.

Staffing

15) the staffing of music teachers for high schools be undertaken in response to the school's job specification, consultation with the principal and with a view to strenghtening already existing programmes before commencing new ones

16) movement of music staff between high schools and colleges, instrumental and classroom be facilitated

17) peripatetic instrumental staff be appointed to take small groups and advanced solo instrument lessons in high schools.

Resources and Facilities

18) i the central music resource collection be extended to include additional:
- solo/ensemble/band/orchestral scores
- music texts
- music education programmes
- multiple copies of class music sets of music and books
- recordings
- teacher support materials
- teaching aids
- classroom and orchestral instrumental pool
- national and international music education journal collection

ii that further acquisitions include those items recommended by teachers

iii that all materials be made available to all teachers

iv a system of review of music education resources be initiated

v a union file on music courses available in all schools be established, made accessible to all teachers and be maintained

Curriculum Management

20) a review of high school timetable practice be undertaken with particular reference to the needs of the arts

21) a review of music teachers' timetables be undertaken with a view to including a portion of their extra curricula activities as teaching time

22) a music curriculum regular newsletter prepared by the consultant be disseminated to all schools

Overview

23) the current music subject review be followed by a further visit by an external consultant to contribute to a high school music curriculum development programme

24) a consultation between all institutions associated with music in the ACT occur in 1984 with a view to making recommendations for the future of music education

25) a special meeting of principals be called to discuss the implications of the review and that part of the discussion centre on the role of the arts in high school education

26) the Authority appoint a high school music curriculum consultant as a matter of urgency

27) a review of the ACT schools band programme be undertaken by an external consultant

28) the findings of both the primary and high school review be meshed to provide a K-10 profile

29) these recommendations be referred to the ACT Schools Authority for consideration and action.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Basis of Assessment

The curriculum review of physical education in secondary schools of the ACT Schools Authority was limited to four (4) one day visits to schools. The time available enabled discussion with staff and observation of a number of lessons.

The Nature of Physical Education

As a basis for discussion, the view taken of physical education in the secondary school was one that took cognizance of the following:

- Physical Education should provide experiences to develop and improve levels of personal fitness, skills development, knowledge and attitudes relating to a healthy lifestyle.
- School programs should provide for a regular involvement in physical education for years 7-10.
- Student choice should be provided for in the selection of activities, especially in Year 9-10.
- Written programs should reflect the curriculum thrusts of the Schools Authority, School Policies, and of what is actually taking place in lessons.
- Student programs should be assessed in a progressive manner through objective testing and professional observation.
- Programs should be evaluated regularly through staff discussion and periodically through a formal process.
- Organisation of faculties should be such that curriculum development, program planning, teaching methodology and the physical tasks of caring for school facilities and equipment should be a continuous and shared process.
- Care should be exercised so that a real concern for the welfare and development of students is a very observable aspect of the faculty workload.

Facilities and Equipment

All schools had very good indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education. Only one school did not have a gymnasium, however there was access to a hall as a shared facility.

In general, these facilities were well cared for, however as they are very costly items, special care needs to be taken to maintain the floor surfaces, markings and internal fixtures.

Equipment in the schools appeared to be sufficient, however in some locations, more attention could be given to the care, maintenance, storage and usage procedures.

Teachers

Band 2 leaders of faculties were enthusiastic about their schools' program, faculty organisation and their staff. It was felt however, that some of the organisational load of physical education, sport and other leadership roles apportioned to them were beginning to overload their time, willingness and capacity to play their role as effective curriculum planners, and professional developers of staff.

It is believed that more specific time needs to be allocated for faculty meetings to discuss the issues of curriculum, planning, teaching methodology and standards in physical education.

Teachers within the faculties ranged from the very experienced to those new to the system and to teaching. All gave the impression of being concerned for the development and welfare of the students. Examples were cited of personal counselling for students and assistance to help with physical, as well as personal social problems. On the other hand, there was a perceived attitude that "the kids get everything they want in Canberra" and that this made teaching more difficult.

There appears to be a need for more support to be available to young or new teachers to the system. Team teaching, more detailed lesson planning and frequent discussions on teacher performance between members of the faculty would provide opportunities for a peer group self improvement program. Alternately, a request for the Physical Education Consultant to work with a faculty on teaching quality, could be made.

Teachers have a wide range of teaching backgrounds and qualifications, however the absence of written curriculum and required standards provides a situation where the best aspects of all teachers are not being encouraged. Teaching therefore lacks real initiative and flair. Only in one school has an initiative been taken to link teaching and some Year 10 students with feeder primary schools.

Students

Students in general seemed to be interested in physical activity, were changed for lessons, participated well and were willing to discuss issues such as their involvement in physical education and whether or not co-educational classes suited them or not. There did not appear to be any high levels of obesity at Forms 1 and 2, however there was some indication of increases in weight at the higher levels. As fitness programs in the schools are not formalised, and only sections of courses deal with this topic, it is not surprising that this is the case.

There were some very talented and highly skilled students in many of the classes. Some of their ability could be attributed to the school program, however teachers were quick to discuss the highly developed community sports program in Canberra. It appeared that a great deal of the skills teaching was being done at the community level. The more gifted students did not appear to be catered for during lesson time. Some efforts should be made to investigate the teaching methods which can be used to cater for individual differences within the same class grouping.

The Curriculum

With the exception of one school there was a general lack of current statments of the physical education curriculum which matched the actual program of teaching.

This lack of written documentation created a difficulty in assessing directions of programs, seeking the desired outcomes, observing for standards being sought, understanding the methods being used for particular purposes, and providing a cohesive basis for a faculty evaluation of programs.

With the exception of a couple of well developed lessons which included appropriate skill drills and practices, the majority of lessons observed were of general games playing. Some were appropriate in context, but the overall impression of teaching is that of involvement without sufficient attention being paid to balance of activities, skill development and progress toward some degree of excellence.

The cyclic timetable has many advantages and is well established in the schools. Different lengths of periods, and different days of the week however, do not necessarily assist the development of a balanced physical education program. Some of the programs rely not only on school facilities, but those of the community who conduct their affairs on a five day a week basis. Although the cyclic program seems fair to all subjects, it does not necessarily assist the continuity of a physical education program, and certainly precludes the notion of a regular (daily) physical education program.

Student choice is a well developed part of physical education programs. This aspect is usually regarded as being a very positive way in which students may have an input to their programs. However, when student choice is mixed with differing notions of "core" curriculum, it creates a situation where physical education can become totally elective rather than an integral part of the school curriculum.

In only one school had there been any real attempt to relate the physical education curriculum to other subject areas. As there are some overlapping areas between physical education, health, junior science and home economics, balance of content and reinforcement by teachers in these areas can greatly assist in making learning more meaningful and relevant.

Student assessment is approached in a formal way, however the information provided for school reporting is very subjective. More attention is required for faculties to fully discuss the reasons for student assessment, and the meanings that it will transmit to parents and teachers.

With an Eye Toward the Future

The ACT Schools Authority is in a unique situation to review, revamp, re-model and work for change in the area of physical education.

There is a strong community network of sporting involvement for students, schools have good indoor and outdoor facilities for the teaching of physical education, students are keen to be involved and the numerical staffing situation is adequate.

With some rationalisation of time tabling, core aspects of the curriculum, electives and student choice, opportunities for the continuous program through Years 7-10 abound.

A concerted program with emphasis on student effort and achievement would greatly improve levels of health, fitness and skills. Coherent faculty emphasis on a written curriculum and plans for administrative procedures, teaching methodology and teacher support would greatly improve the latent potential of physical education teaching in the ACT.

With the acceptance of Daily Physical Education in Primary Schools in the ACT the impact will soon be felt in the secondary schools. They will soon be required to adjust to this impact. Re-organisation and change now could provide for this inevitable adjustment.

In practical terms, the basis for improvement is firmly in the area of teachers wanting to improve and the Schools Authority being willing to support such a movement. Discussions on standards, levels of achievement, and ways and means of catering for the disinterested, the skilled and the slow learner, working with community groups, writing curriculum documents, and the introduction of realistic student assessment techniques must be achieved at school level with inspired leadership from Band 2 teachers. The Schools Authority should support faculty action through conferences, visits by consultants and regular follow up action.

SCIENCE AND AGRICULTURE

1. Some general comments

The ACT Schools Authority may justly take pride in many aspects of its school system. School buildings are extensive, substantial, and architecturally impressive. The grounds are attractive, well maintained, and planted with an array of carefully selected native plants. Teachers are well qualified and, in the main, staffing of schools is adequate for most curriculum programs. Serious attempts have been made by school staffs to develop programs that serve the curriculum needs of their students, and in most schools there appears to be an obvious caring attitude by the staff and the School Board towards the needs of individual students. The principle of school-based curriculum decision-making has been accepted, and a beginning has been made on devising innovative courses in some schools.

The comments and recommendations that follow are based on a series of two-day visits to each of four high schools. As generalisations, their validity is a function of the degree to which the schools represent a general sample of the ACT high school system.

2. Curriculum Issues

In each school visited considerable documentation existed on science and, where appropriate, agriculture curriculum. Efforts had been made to clearly define broad aims which were in agreement with school ams, and for most topics objectives had been elucidated.

In all schools Science received an adequate time allocation.

The science curriculum in most schools was academically-oriented, conservative, and traditional. Whilst there is considerable variety in its organisation there is little evidence of innovation and liberalisation of its content. There appears to be considerable scope for revising the sequence and content of many topics with a view to presenting them so that they correspond more closely to the intellectual stages of development of children. Many topics listed in the physical sciences for Year eight courses should be transferred to later years when students have more fully developed the capacity for abstract thought. One detects, very early in some science courses, a determination to commit students to rigorous studies of demanding concepts. Surely they would better be occupied mastering simple basic scientific concepts and skills at a more concrete level than being prematurely thrust into considerations of abstract scientific models such as detailed atomic structure, valency, and the periodic table. Many more complex topics studied in years nine and ten might well be left to College courses. Schools should more actively be encouraged to develop more liberal, innovative science coures.

The Schools Authority should consider sponsoring centrally the development of non-prescriptive curriculum guidelines in science at all year levels. Such guidelines would provide science faculties with a list of topics to be studied at each year level. These should be given in outline only, so that it is the responsibility and right of all teachers concerned to develop their courses in appropriate detail, and in accordance with the perceived needs of their students. The professional rights of teachers to indulge in the curriculum decision-making process could be further enhanced by structuring the curriculum guidelines on a core-option basis, so that, say, twenty-five percent of the time in each year would be available to individual teachers to develop optional areas of their own choice, as they choose. Such a scheme might assist in over-coming curriculum problems associated with student movement from school to school in the ACT, and also would provide significant support for teachers new to the system.

Most lessons observed were based on experimentation by students. This is to be strongly commended. Whilst there is always a place for the teacher-centred demonstration lesson or explanatory discussion, modern science teaching theory continues to advocate student-centred, experiential teaching.

The use of resource teachers who work in tandem with the class science teacher to assist children with reading and other difficulties is commended. Some very valuable teaching by resource teachers was observed. Ideally, specially trained personnel should be used as resource teachers, however experience shows that there is merit in using teachers with non-specialist training if the former are not available. There is an obvious need to provide in-service training for non-specialist resource teachers prior to their operation with classes.

There is an established need for developing consultancy as an effective and efficient support service for science teachers. This does not appear to be operating successfully at present. Little seems to be known by teachers of the nature and details, even their availability, of the science consultancy services. There is a need for the Schools Authority to publicly define policy on consultancy services so that the support that is promised on page forty-three of the document "Current Curriculum Practice in ACT Government Schools" becomes available, and known, to class-room teachers and heads of Science departments.

Students are subjected to continuous testing, which in some schools is excessive. In general, reporting procedures are satisfactory. Most teachers keep detailed records of student achievement, and the components of the total assessments given to students are appropriate. There is clear evidence that students' work is regularly corrected and marked. Most student assessment is achievement oriented and little evidence of diagnostic testing was obtained. It is suggested that the latter point be more seriously considered as an important

component of effective teaching. Teachers may need some support in this regard.

It is apparent that little opportunity is given to science faculty staff to meaningfully review and evaluate their course. If this is to be an effective and useful exercise it is suggested that each school be given the automatic right, after approval of a proposed program by the Authority, to a maximum of four curriculum days per year (not necessarily consecutive), to be used for curriculum evaluation and professional development of staff.

Some teachers are of the opinion that procedures at present in use for the approval of the school's courses by the School Board are not very effective, nor are the administrative procedures at the Schools Authority. There is concern that more rigorous requirements would be advantageous to the successful development of useful curriculum documents.

The four stages of education, primary, high school, college, and tertiary institution, appear to occur in isolation one from another. There are obvious discontinuities at the years six and seven (primary to high school) and Years ten and eleven (high school to college) transitions in science education, and indeed in most aspects of education at these stages. Only in a few instances does there appear to be constructive liaison between primary and high schools, and colleges. Most teachers and heads of departments lack a detailed knowledge of subject philosophy, aims, objectives, and content of science courses in institutions other than their own. In many cases the relevance of the need for this is denied, or not realised, and it appears that this is reciprocated by teachers, and even princials, in other parts of the education system. If science education is to be seen as a continuum, or even a set of complementary knowledge, which is to be presented to children in an interesting, challenging, creative, and inspiring manner, then it seems imperative that all teachers and science administrators, irrespective of their place in the school system, should be thoroughly familiar with what is occurring at all points in the science education of children.

It also is important for teachers in the various stages of science education to acknowledge, complement, and develop the work of others. At present this is quite seriously not the case. There is, most urgently, a breakdown in communication and continuity of science education at the high school-college transition. As a consequence, both year ten students and teachers in high schools, and possibly colleges, are subject to academic stresses that may be quite unnecessary.

Because of the relatively small number of schools involved it would be meaningful to convene a regular meeting of band two teachers from the high schools and colleges. This would ensure more adequate liaision and understanding between key personnel in both parts of the post-primary science education system, and, providing attendance was mandatory, should help to

overcome the breakdown in communication and understanding that now exists between high school and college science staffs.

3. Consultancy in Science

While much valuable work has been done in science consultancy there is an urgent need to develop it further. Within the schools there does not appear to be a viable, continuing liaison between the science staffs and the consultant. Many teachers have not had direct access to a consultant, nor do they understand the consultant's role and potential for their own professional development. It is suggested that the Schools Authority should publicise more widely its policy on the role and scope of consultancy services in science so that all teachers are fully informed of the considerable potential of the support services provided for them in this way. In particular, the science consultant should be provided with sufficient time release to service all schools with advice on science curriculum development and evaluation, the provision of resources, the organisation of system-wide in-service activities for teachers, other aspects of professional development in science, and even the provision of an informal moderating function for science education throughout ACT schools. If this is to be done effectively consideration must be given to the allocation of sufficient personnel to do the expected tasks well. It is suggested that consultants should be appointed primarily for their knowledge and expertise in general science, rather than for their specialist subject field. If more than one consultant is appointed individuals might then be selected for the way in which their specialist subjects complement one another.

In other states it has been found that the most successful consultants have adopted a task-centred approach, in which they have been prepared to work together with teachers on their problems. It therefore is suggested that consultants should be minimally office-bound so that they are free to work s completely as possible in schools.

4. Teacher Training and Qualifications

Science teachers are well qualified, most having university degrees. Some of the older, more experienced teachers have only two years of training. In general, science faculties are staffed by very experienced teachers who exercise good control over students. The number of inexperienced teachers was small, and subject leaders provided them with adequate support and encouragement.

In discussions with science staff at all levels it was generally agreed that there is an urgent need for the method training of young teachers to contain a much stronger element of classroom control and curriculum development techniques. The opinion was expressed that student-teachers do not learn how to teach demonstration lessons, nor do they see master teachers at work in their classrooms, except perhaps during teaching

rounds. In summary, there appears to be a need for a stronger component of general classroom teaching method work in the training of student teachers.

The in-service training of teachers is an area that requires considerable attention, both in terms of the opportunity for attendance at activities that is afforded to teachers, and the range and quality of relevant courses available to them. In some developing curriculum areas that service the needs of considerable numbers of students in some schools, such as horticulture, no significant in-service courses or facilities are available. Consequently, because qualified teachers of horticulture are required, interested teachers are forced to enrol for three years in evening courses taken in their own time. The Schools Authority should consider introducing time release for limited numbers of selected teachers in these curriculum areas.

Professional development of teachers is an important role that requires development by individual school administrations as well as the Schools Authority. If the school system is exclusively to service its own needs then there is a danger of "pooling its own ignorance". It is important that teachers have the opportunity to visit, observe, and report on, other school systems, as well as for them to come into active contact with authoritative figures from other State and international educational systems. There is little evidence that this is occurring.

5. Resources

Schools appear to have adequate funding for the provision of basic resources for science teaching. The supply of equipment and chemicals is sufficient to allow science classes to perform a suitable range of practical work, and teachers to demonstrate the usual series of teaching experiments. Laboratories are well built, well-fitted with services, and supplied with plenty of storage. Except for large classes of thirty or more students, they provide safe facilities for students to work in. Each science faculty observed had the services of a competent laboratory assistant. In each school all science classes were accommodated in science laboratories, and no classes were being taught in non-specialist science rooms.

6. Agriculture Teaching

Not all schools teach agriculture. In those that do it is an elective, and receives the same time allocation as other subjects. It is available to students at Years 8, 9 and 10 and attracts a significant number of students at each year level.

Courses are well documented, with appropriate sets of aims and a detailed account of topics to be studied.

Considerable innovative and creative thought has been involved in the development of some of the agriculture courses and practical activities, and teachers have contributed many hours

of imaginative activity in the development of school agriculture facilities. The provision of specialised buildings varies from school to school. In all schools observed a glasshouse was provided, and serves as a valuable part of the agriculture/horticulture resources.

The teaching of agriculture and horitculture has several aspects that render them different from other subjects. These include:

1. the need to provide students with practical experiences with plants and animals.

2. the requirement to teach beyond the classroom.

3. the use of land laboratories e.g. horticulture plots, grazing land for sheep, space in which to keep beehives.

4. providing students with specialist equipment e.g. gardening tools, drenching guns.

5. the need to provide continuous care, shelter, and food for animals, and water for gardens and glasshouses.

As a result there is a continuous demand on the spare time of agriculture teachers, including their leisure and holiday time. It is essential, if agriculture teaching is to develop in accordance with student demands, that provision be made for the appointment of an agriculture assistant to perform the non-teaching tasks fundamental to the organisation, maintenance, and development of the agriculture facilities in schools. Additionally, there is an urgent need to provide specific funding to establish and maintain agriculture facilities and equipment in schools.

The development of agriculture and horticulture in ACT schools would benefit considerably from the appointment of a consultant to advise teachers on curriculum development, the development and rationalisation of resources, management of land laboratories and animals, the organisation of in-service activities and the provision of advice regarding other aspects of teaching.

Agriculture teachers are well qualified both academically and in terms of their practical acquaintance with animals, plants and equipment. As a result there is a strong practical component in the courses they teach, and this is strongly commended. Exclusively theoretical courses in agriculture and horticulture are not recommended.

7. General Issues

Accountability Across the System

Whilst the stated aim of the Schools Authority is to encourage individual school communities to develop curriculum programs that satisfy their particular needs there appears also to be a

growing unserviced need for schools to be brought to account for all aspects of their activities. Some schools are more actively accepting the Authority's aim of producing innovative curricula than others. There is an increasing variety of course structures and organisations developing. Liaison between different high schools and colleges varies in its effectiveness. Some strategies for the organisation of schools and subject departments are more effective than others. How are these to be evaluated, reported on, reviewed, and adjusted, if necessary? There is a need for experienced educationists to be based in the Schools Authority office, but accessible to schools, in order to make assessments of changes, desirable or already occurring, in the system.

School Leadership

Some examples of fine school leadership were seen. There is undoubtedly a need, as in all school systems, for providing potential and existing school administrators with training courses in school leadership and administration. The Institute of Educational Administration in Victoria is just one example of how this may be provided. An essential feature of any such facility is that there should be a strong element of "foreign" input from outside the local system, in order to inject perspective and additional knowledge. The tendency to be self-satisfied with the achievements of an isolated group can lead to false conclusions about the educational effectiveness of that group. It is suggested that there is some evidence that this may be occurring in some high schools of the ACT.

Career Mobility of Teachers

The Campbell report advocates the importance of the concept of the educational continuum represented by high schools and colleges. Evidence suggests that, in terms of science teacher movements between the high schools and colleges, there are very few staff interchanges. As a result many teachers in both types of institution are unacquainted with even the basic details of curriculum practice and theory, and professional life in general, in the institution in which they do not work. Despite this they are preparing students for, or receiving them from, the corresponding stage in the system. This can only lead to unnecessary stresses on students and teachers in both high schools and colleges, as well as imposing career frustrations on teachers who wish to gain valuable experience of all facets of the post-primary system of education.

Streaming

In most schools visited rigid streaming procedures were practised in science classes. The purpose of streaming in science should be questioned. Do the advantages for students of streaming outweigh the disadvantages? Is streaming merely an administrative assessment, and teaching convenience for teachers? Skilled, experienced, well-trained science teachers should be able to effectively and efficiently teach, and

challenge, a heterogeneous class without finding this too demanding.

It is suggested that the practice of streaming, particularly with regard to its effects, potential or actual, on children, should be rigorously examined.

Use of Student I.Q. Measures

In several schools I.Q. is used as a medium for fine-tuning student streaming, despite the fact that other education systems have completely discarded the use of I.Q. at least fifteen years ago. The concept, and measurement, of I.Q. has long been a debatable issue, and its use as a measure of a student's likely performance, particularly in marginal cases, has long been discounted as unreliable, unprofessional, and unnecessary. Its usage in ACT schools for streaming children should be strongly discouraged.

Funding of Schools

It is apparent that government funding provided to schools in quite inadequate. Without the voluntary contribution of funds to schools by parents it would be extremely difficult for schools to function. Figures quoted in one school showed that well over forty percent of the school's total funding came from parent sources.

Support for Laboratory Assistants

Competent laboratory assistants were observed in all schools however, to ensure that professional development is available to them it is recommended that an association of school science laboratory assistants, possibly as a sub-group of the Science Teachers' Association, should be formed. This will have obvious professional benefits such as the sharing of knowledge; support for personnel, each of whom works somewhat in isolation; and as a forum for discussion of issues of mutual concern.

Recommendations

1. There is a need to liberalise the content of science curriculum. The aim of this process is to reduce the traditional, conservative, approach to science education so that a more innovative, creative, interesting, and yet equally demanding approach is used.

2. Science courses should be reviewed, with particular regard being paid to the content and sequence of topics. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that science curriculum is presented in accordance with the level of children's intellectual development.

3. Science curriculum guidelines should be developed for the Schools Authority by a committee of experienced science teachers.

4. Where non-specialist resource teachers (i.e. teachers not trained as resource teachers) are used in science teaching they should take a suitable course in in-service education before acting as resource teachers.

5. The Schools Authority needs to define, refine, and publicise widely its policy on Science consultancy.

6. Science consultants, with adequate time release, are required to service and support school science departments.

7. Science consultants should adopt a task-centred approach. They should not be office bound but should be free to work in schools with teachers on problem situations.

8. A stronger component of diagnostic testing should be developed in science departments.

9. In most schools less time should be spent on achievement testing.

10. Each science faculty, after it receives formal approval for a documented program, should have the right to several school days (not more than four) of student-free time to review, evaluate, and rewrite curriculum.

11. More demanding procedures should be established to approve science courses.

12. Regular, mandatory meetings of high school and college band two teachers (heads of science departments) should be convened. Primary teachers of science should also be represented at these meetings.

13. The pre-service training or science teachers should contain a stronger component of classroom teaching method. Student teachers should also observe science master teachers in demonstration lessons.

14. There is a need to provide time release for teachers of new subjects that are considered worthwhile, e.g. horticulture to allow them to gain the necessary expertise in these subjects.

15. The Schools Authority should consider sponsoring a professional development facility that allows its teachers and administrators to interact with inspiring educationists from outside its system.

16. If it is to continue its established innovative approach to curriculum development Agriculture will require the allocation of specific subject funding, the appointment of at least a part-time field assistant to schools, and the provision of a subject consultant.

17. The Schools Authority should address the problem of ensuring effective accountability of high schools. The School Board system is not a suitable, or effective, means of ensuring professional accountability.

18. The Schools Authority should consider ways of nurturing and supporting school leadership at Band Two, Three and Four levels, particularly for the latter two.

19. Career mobility for teachers between high schools and colleges should be reviewed and improved.

20. Streaming in science classes cannot be justified.

21. The use of I.Q. to establish, and particularly to fine-tune, streaming is unacceptable and should be discontinued.

22. The unsatisfactory level of funding pro.ided for high schools should be statistically documented and drawn to the attention of the federal government.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

It is important to note that this report is based on a limited visit to only four ACT High Schools. There are consequently a number of generalisations made which may not be true of all schools.

There were many extremely good aspects observed in the schools visit, in particular some outstanding examples of classroom teaching and evidence of a high level of care by staff towards students. However, due to the nature of the exercise this report concentrates on areas of concern.

This report is broken into three parts:

1. General observations on ACT Government High Schools
2. The nature of Social Science
3. Social Science in ACT Government High Schools.

1. General Observations on ACT Government High Schools

The separation of the High Schools and the Colleges should provide an excellent opportunity to reappraise the purpose of the compulsory phase of secondary education and to refashion the curriculum so as to provide a broad general education for every student during these four years.

The High Schools are freed from any overriding concern with preparing students for tertiary studies and clearly the Colleges impose no restricting pre-requisites for students moving up from the High Schools.

Unfortunately in most cases this opportunity has not been grasped. The curriculum offered in a number of schools appears to be more a result of historical accident and administrative ease than the outcome of any realistic appraisal of the real needs of students.

The Authority needs not only to identify those broad principles and aims which should be shared by the schools within its system, but needs to take the further step of identifying and articulating what essential learning experiences are necessary to achieve these aims. The Curriculum Development Centre's Core Curriculum would seem to offer an excellent model for such a statement.

Recommendation:

> The ACT Schools Authority should issue a clear and unequivocal statement which sets out the essential learning experiences that every High School student should experience.

The widespread practice in many schools of placing special value on so-called "academic subjects" makes it difficult to offer to all students a well rounded general education.

Recognition must be given to the fact that many experiences - social, aesthetic, spiritual, emotional as well as intellectual contribute to the education of every student.

Recommendation:

> The Authority should take steps to encourage school to put into practice as well as theory the recognition that a whole range of learning experiences contribute to the student's education and that all should be equally valued.

A number of widespread curriculum practices within the High Schools further seriously limit the student's access to a broad general education.

A predominately elective program made up of a large number of often disparate short units, while providing access to a very wide range of experiences also runs the risk that students will miss out on some essential areas of learning. There is also the possibility under this practice that students will not experience the consistent development of skills and key concepts necessary for the growth of understandings.

More serious is the practice of early specialisation which effectively limits student experiences by locking them into narrow choices as early as Year 8. This manner of delivering curriculum makes it inevitable that students will miss out on some experiences generally considered essential.

Recommendation:

> The ACT Schools Authority should issue clear guidelines on the manner in which curriculum choices are structured in High Schools so as to guarantee a sound broad general education.

The practice of tying Band 2 positions to existing subject areas and thus tying promotional opportunities to existing subjects makes it very difficult for real curriculum change to take place at the school level. Existing departments are more likely to attempt to increase their status within the school and any area without a Band 2 of its own lacks power to initiate any substantial curriculum change. This practice appears to be a formula for maintaining the status quo.

Recommendation:

> The ACT Schools Authority should consider ways of separating Band 2 positions from narrow subject areas, either allocating them to other duties or trying to broaden curriculum areas identified as essential areas of learning.

Curriculum review in many High Schools seems to be little more than a reshuffling of units from the registration of programs. Certainly the Curriculum Committees that exist in most schools seem to be little more than rubber stamps and rarely initiate

any sort of change themselves. Similarly, many AP's (Curriculum) do not appear to see their role as initiating any major curriculum change.

Interaction between schools seems to be minimal and membership in many professional associations has declined markedly. Participation in In-service-education seems to be fairly low - almost non-existant in some schools. ISE programs appear to be very content based with few being directed at curriculum construction or even the exploration of a range of teaching strategies. Consultant availability is very limited and many schools don't appear to use them at all.

Recommendation:

The ACT Schools Authority needs to find ways to generate interest in curriculum development among its teachers and schools. These might include:-

- mandatory student free days by schools, regions, the whole system for curriculum review and development, including gatherings of like faculties;
- the introduction of outside "change agents" and consultants;
- opportunities for exchange and travel by its teachers;
- greater professional development for those in leadership roles particularly in curriculum construction and evaluation and in supervisory and support roles.

Streaming appears to be fairly widespread. While there is much debate on the pros and cons of streaming, it is generally recognized that it is quite inappropriate for some areas of curriculum.

There appears to be an inordinate emphasis on assessment at all year levels throughout most High Schools, particularly assessment which grades performance. This in turn appears to be a major factor in determining the curriculum and in particular the teaching strategies adopted. It would seem preferable if a far greater emphasis was placed on descriptive evaluation focusing on the identification of student strengths and weaknesses, particularly in the lower years.

Recommendation:

The ACT Schools Authority should develop guidelines in regard to streaming and in regard to assessment and reporting procedures. Appropriate in-service education support should be provided.

In general there seem to be wide incongruences between the laudatory philosophies and aims of many schools and the curriculum as delivered. Most schools claim to provide a broad general education catering for every facet of the student's development, yet provide programs which narrow choice and often leave whole areas of the student's development uncatered for.

Most schools lay emphasis on the growth of the individual, on fostering initiative in thinking, on the awareness of the rights of others, on problem solving and decision making, on accepting responsibility and yet provide learning experiences which are highly teacher centred and where student interaction in the classroom is minimal.

Recommendation:

> The ACT Schools Authority should ensure that its schools look realistically at the incongruence of stated aims and delivered curriculum and ensure that the real needs of students are met.

2. The Nature of Social Science

The systematic study of society goes under many titles. Social Studies, Social Science and Social Education are all commonly applied throughout Australia. For this report the term Social Science will be used.

While there is a great deal of debate throughout Australia on the exact form that a study of society should take, there is widespread agreement that Social Science is that part of the curriculum which is primarily concerned with equipping students with the necessary understandings and skills to make sense of and to better cope with their contemporary world. Because society is itself multi-faceted, Social Science must draw from many disciplines if it is to provide the necessary conceptual framework through which students can view society. However, it is generally agreed that an integrated, problem solving/inquiry approach is a far more effective way to achieve these aims of social competence than a single disciplined approach.

It is important to stress that while the individual disciplines are not necessarily studied for their own sake, Social Science can have just as much academic rigour as any other subject in the curriculum.

It is a misunderstanding to see Social Science as synonomous with Social Living. Social Science along with all subjects in the curriculum has a contribution to make to the living/survival skills of students, but its critical importance to the education of students goes beyond that.

The guiding principles and stated aims of every education system in Australia stress the centrality of social competency. This has been reinforced by the findings of every systematic attempt to identify essential areas of learning. It is towards this broad area of social competency that Social Science is directed.

A number of factors in our present society, factors which almost certainly will become more marked in the immediate future, have made it even more imperative that a systematic and relevant Social Science program be established as a central component of every school's curriculum. These factors include:

- the rapidly changing nature of Australian society
- the increased plurality of Australian society
- the increased mobility of Australian society
- the breakdown of previously unquestioned social mores
- the impact of technological change
- changing work patterns
- the growing energy crisis
- the deterioration of the environment.

3. Social Science in ACT Government High Schools

It is very difficult to clearly define and identify Social Science in ACT High Schools. Its components differ markedly from school to school, appearing to be more the result of administrative whim, existing power play or the academic background of staff than of any natural view of its role in the education of students. This state of affairs makes it difficult for the faculty and teachers to establish an identity and a common direction. This also makes efficient professional growth difficult for those teachers involved, especially interaction with other schools.

In most schools Social Science is a hotch potch of disparate parts, left over from pre-Authority days - an educational historian's dream, but hardly appropriate for providing programs which adequately meet the needs of students facing a rapidly changing society.

Recommendation:

In any restructuring of subject areas that may occur the key components of Social Science should be clearly identified and learning areas which are only under its umbrella for administrative purposes should be reallocated. Social Science departments across schools should be more uniform in the areas of curriculum they encompass.

In most ACT High Schools Social Science has a relatively low status. This appears to be mainly a historical carry over from the strongly academic NSW system, from which the ACT system sprang, but is compounded by the ill conceived and fractured nature of Social Science in the schools. The notion that Social Science is "non-academic" becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as lower achieving children are directed into Social Science programs and teachers adjust courses to meet their needs. The point must be made that Social Science can be as rigorous as any other subject, but more importantly it must be stressed that all children should have the opportunity to be involved in a systematic inquiry into the key issues of their contemporary social world.

Recommendation:

The ACT Schools Authority must ensure that a clear theoretical basis is established for Social Science and that schools in the system clearly understand the critical need for its inclusion in the education of all students of compulsory school age.

Students in the ACT High Schools are, in general, being provided with an out dated and inappropriate Social Science curriculum. In most of the State systems it has been generally accepted that Social Science should be providing students with a broad conceptual framework through which they can make sense of their contemporary world. The programs offered should emphasise inquiry approach with consideration given to key social issues and they should involve an integration of all areas of knowledge which can contribute to the students' better understanding.

ACT High School programs in the main are non-integrated and extremely traditional. They are basically a separate history taught narrowly and chronologically and/or a separate geography taught again in a narrow traditional way. Frequently students are forced to choose one of these for their whole school career, but even if they take both they are rarely related. History and Geography are often separate departments and this administrative arrangement more than anything else makes any rationalisation of curriculum highly unlikely. Some limited, but usually more relevant, legal and consumer studies are sometimes available as an alternative.

Little, if any, consideration is given to those areas of knowledge covered by the newer Social Sciences such as Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science and Social Psychology. These knowledge areas are the very ones that encompass the key issues which should be at the basis of secondary school Social Science - social change, role conflict, peer group pressure, discrimination and prejudice, unemployment and so on.

More seriously perhaps, the teaching strategies adopted are largely expository in nature concentrating on the transfer of knowledge but doing little for the student's ability to think critically or solve problems.

Within the High School curriculum, Social Science would appear to need major reappraisal and reshaping for a number of reasons.

a) It is arguable that, given the rapidly changing nature of Australian society and the crisis point that society is reaching in relation to the environment it shares, Social Science may well be the most critical aspect of curriculum that schools offer to students.

b) The way in which Social Science curriculum has emerged in ACT schools seems to be completely haphazard, quite irrational and based on an outdated model.

c) As it exists Social Science lacks cohesion and purpose.

d) The approach to Social Science appears to be out of step with the approach which exists or is emerging in most of the other systems.

Recommendation:

A Social Science project team should be set up immediately to undertake the following tasks:

a) Draft a statement which justifies a sweeping and effective approach to Social Science and by so doing raises its status in the eyes of the community and schools.

b) Prepare practical sound guidelines for the development of Social Science courses (along the lines of the South Australian Learning and Living course). While not being prescriptive these guidelines should give enough direction to ensure that schools do in reality provide relevant and comprehensive Social Science programs, not merely cosmetic changes to what exists.

c) Provide one or more well developed course outlines which schools not wishing to develop their own programs within the guidelines can adopt or adapt.

d) Assist teachers in adapting new teaching strategies which are more appropriate for a problem solving/ inquiry approach to Social Science. It is important that there be enough practical options and that a graduated number of steps leading to an inquiry approach is developed so that teachers do not feel too threatened.

e) Identify and communicate to teachers the resources necessary for new Social Science programs.

f) Provide wide ranging in-service education and consultant support in the construction of appropriate programs and in the development of appropriate teaching methodology.

It must be stressed that before such major change can be undertaken the community, schools, teachers and students must be convinced that the change is essential and that teachers not only do not feel threatened, but are encouraged to participate in what should be an exciting and professionally challenging redirection of the Social Science curriculum. This will be best achieved when program resources and support are all readily available.